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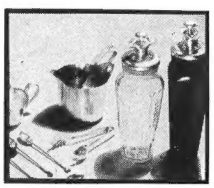

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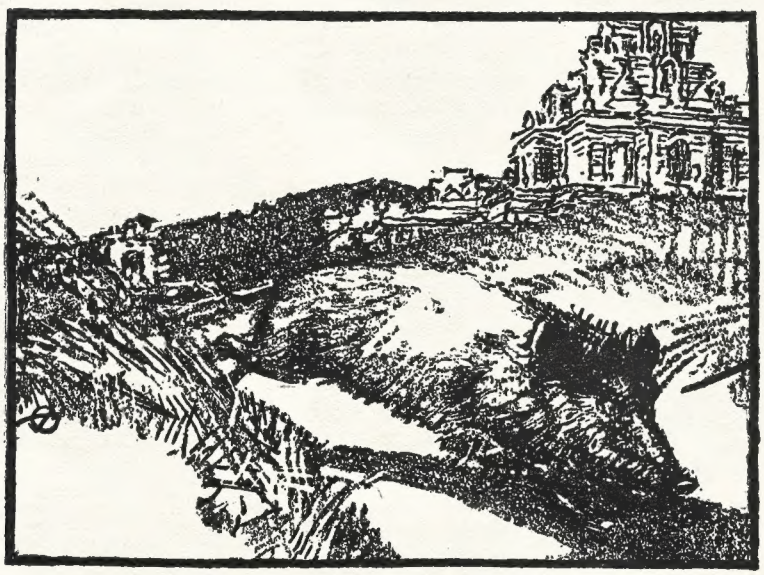
By *the Man who Wrote*

The EYE-TEETH



THERE was darkness drenched with starlight and the comforting sound of many horses at a picket beyond the glowing camp-fire. There was a smell that included saddles, tobacco, woodsmoke and the syces' supper. Some of the tents were dark already, but from others came talk and laughter; and there was one false note for the sake of contrast. It was written at the birth of time, presumably, that nothing human shall be perfect. Therefore Major Jones was singing, nasally off-key, a nasty song about the lights of London; nasty because it was immoral even to imagine London in that setting.

But Jones never did anything right, except to pay his bills and raise hell with the mess cook if the curry was not to his liking. Jones was due for retirement next month; this was his last ride with the tent club. He was probably trying to make himself enjoy the prospect of home and half pay.

But it was Larry O'Hara's first ride—not his first time out to "pig," but his first in distinguished company. He was the youngest present, and a lot too sensible not to know that his father's reputation was a deadly liability. The son of General O'Hara must be either a nonentity contented to be General O'Hara's son, or else he must cut such a swath for himself that even India would presently forget the proverb: "Great king's sons are little princes."

He had done well thus far. Indian native cavalry can, will, does find—

"The Soul of a Regiment"

of O'HARA

swiftly and unmercifully—the weak spots in subalterns fresh from their first year's training with a British regiment. He had earned his transfer to the Guides and he had passed in languages; by grim self-discipline and study he had learned the difficult but absolutely necessary trick of being hardboiled and at the same time sympathetic; reckless, ruthless and goodhumored; proud, exacting; nevertheless, so friendly that the Rajput troopers of his squadron spoke of him as Larry sahib.

But he knew that it would take more than that to overcome his handicap. By only one means may a man transcend a reputation such as General O'Hara had built up for himself and burned into the brazen rolls of time.

By TALBOT MUNDY

So he sat in the door of his tent considering—a handsome fellow, built, like so many Irish gentlemen, as if he were intended to be part and parcel with a fine horse. He had blue-gray eyes that doubted all things except such as he himself had tested. He himself was not yet tested, and he knew that. It amused him to imagine how his self-contempt would feel if he should fail in one essential. So, when shadow moved within a shadow and a slight sound stole forth from the fifty silences that are the pulse of India's night, and when a voice said, "Sahib, may I draw near?" he was in as cynical a mood as

he ever permitted himself. To throw that off he welcomed interruption.

"Yes—come."

"I am Padadmaroh."

"I knew your voice. What is it?"

"It is not much. It is just a little matter. Are we alone, sahib?"

"Yes. Drag up that horse blanket, Padadmaroh. Put it there, where I can see your face against the firelight. Now sit down, ancient of days, and tell me of this little matter that is not much."

Firelight changed the shadow into a gray bearded bronze native, clad in cotton loincloth and an Englishman's old Norfolk jacket out at elbow. Padadmaroh might have sat to Rembrandt for a portrait of the least conventional Apostle. Bowed by experience, he was, and, beneath that worn look, fierce with passion for essentials. Poverty was nothing to him, and his pride might not be judged by any normal standard. Deep eyes, beneath a ragged turban, saw through surfaces and did not announce what they saw.

"So. Men tell me, sahib, that you do well. I have heard that the squadron rides behind you as a wolf pack at the heels of a seasoned leader."

"Nonsense," said O'Hara. "I have not yet cut my eye-teeth."

"That is well said. Sahib, I was head *shikarri** to your father—whose father my father served as a scout in the wars up northward, in the days when death lay fifty paces off and not a mile away, as it does now. Then men shot each other. Now they shoot at nothing, and are shot from nowhere. Then, when the guns grew hot, men had at one another's throats and it was easy, sahib—easy to learn who was pukka."

O'HARA paused for a moment, then said thoughtfully:

"You have seen a lot of changes, Padadmaroh. Tanks, motors, airplanes—"

"Aye, and India is changing, sahib. But there is one thing that does not change. He who has it has it. He who has it not is not worth trouble But how shall he know that he has it?"

"No man ever can know," O'Hara answered. "No matter what's behind a man, there may be something ahead that will make him crack and act up."

"Sahib, there is also this that never changes. It is the way of the wild boar. He is the tester. He is the cutter of men's eye-teeth."

"They say the pigs are plentiful," O'Hara answered. "We are out after them at daybreak."

"Ah. He who will ride at a boar needs bowels. And within the bowels, entrails. And within the entrails, guts. But there are guts and guts, as there are boars and boars. And it is one thing to ride in company. It is another thing, sahib, to ride alone against an old one who has slain men."

"Four of us ride tomorrow," O'Hara answered. "You know our custom."

"Sahib, listen to me. I am old. I said to General O'Hara, *'Sahib, bahadur,* the test of a man is his courage. But the fruit of a man is the son of his loins.' And he nodded, as his way was when he was thoughtful, stroking his nose thus between thumb and finger. So I said to him then, *'Bahadur,* shall I test your son when it is time?' "

"What did he say?" O'Hara answered curiously.

"He said, 'Why not? He must find out somehow. Will it matter who mistrusts him if he learns to trust himself? If he is rotten, let him know it, lest he get in good men's way.' So I answered, 'I will test him.' I am ready, sahib."

"To the devil with you," said O'Hara. "Do you take me for a damned fool?"

"Nay, I know not. But I know this: he slew a tiger."

"Who did?"

"That one of whom I came to speak to you. He is the father of boars—a gray boar, and a lone one. All my days what was I? A *shikarri.* Since I was younger than you are, sahib, there has not been one gray boar on all this coun-

* Native hunter

tryside, but I knew where he kept himself, and guessed his weight, and knew his character. And before me my father did likewise. Not in his day nor in mine has such a boar been seen. This one is higher by my hand's breadth than that one they slew in Guzerat in '79; and that one was a wonder.

"That one slew two men and half a dozen horses in his last charge. There were eight against him, and I saw it. Hah! I say he slew two; and he slew six horses. There were three spears sticking in him when he charged the last time, and the officer who killed him lost his right eye, because one of those spears struck him as the boar rose at the horse's belly. That was a boar of boars, but not as good as this one. As a man's breath to a typhoon, so was that good boar compared to this one of which I now speak."

"Trot him out then and we'll ride him," said O'Hara.

"Nay."

"Why?"

"In the first place, who am I that I should waste a gray boar who has slain men? Never was one like him—never. Sahib, I say he slew a tiger."

"Did you see that?"

"Nay. But I saw the tiger; and I sold his torn pelt for ten rupees, that should have been worth three hundred had that boar not cut it to ribbons. And I saw the boar that same day, bloody from the tiger's claws that smote but could not conquer him."

"How long ago was that?"

"Six months and nine days, sahib. I followed that boar to a waterhole and watched him wallow until he had plastered himself with clean mud and the blood ceased flowing. Since that day he is a lone one and not even a sow dares come within a mile of him. He is a boar of boars. There are a thousand devils in him, and his is the cunning of madness."

Larry O'Hara studied the old man's silhouette against the firelight.

"So is mine," he answered. "If I were as mad as you think, I'd be a lot too cunning to let you know it. What's the idea? Want to take me in a trap of some sort? What for?"

"I am an old man, sahib. Ere I die I wish to see what would make it worthwhile to have lived. When I was your age each young sahib had to earn his spurs. They cut his eye-teeth for him on the edge of difficulty; as for instance, it was three days' ride to this place, that you come to nowadays in two hours, in a car that stinks, whose syce is a Sikh afraid of horses. It is all too easy."

"Saves time," said O' Hara.

"Even the horses came by motor truck. I saw it."

"Saves the horses," said O'Hara.

"Sahib, how are the horses?"

"Splendid. I've a nine-year-old—a mare that won the Punjab cup. She's savage. My second's a half Arab country-bred, a bit young and a trifle nervous but as game as hell when he once gets going. And my third is a flea bitten Kathiawari, about one-eighth Percheron—strong as an elephant, but clever on her feet and fairly fast."

"Sahib, ride that one."

"When? Why?"

SILENCE, as the fire died and the shadows deepened. Major Jones ceased singing and a snore came from a nearby tent. Then a horse in the picket line neighed and a syce rebuked him. Silence again, until marauding jackals suddenly began to chatter like ghouls and some one's tethered dog defied them at the top of his lungs. Presently a camp attendant heaped more fuel on the fire, so that Larry O'Hara's face glowed within the overshadowing tent and Padadmaroh's silhouette grew sharp again. But the old man still said nothing.

Then came Major Jones, long legged, striding like a stork because there might be scorpions and he was wearing slippers. O'Hara's servant stepped un-

summoned out of black night and produced a chair for him.

"I hate to drink alone," said Jones. "It's rotten morals. So I told my boy to bring us both a nightcap. Everybody else has turned in. Who is this man?"

"Padadmaroh. Used to know my father. Wants to introduce me to a special pig. He swears it's bigger than an elephant and that it makes a hobby of killing tigers before breakfast. I invited him to show it to us all, but he refuses; says it's my pig, says he wants to test my guts."

Jones leaned forward and began to question Padadmaroh, but the old man drew himself into a shell of silence guarded by assumed stupidity, the everlasting native Indian refuge from the white man's hectoring. Jones struck a match and showed him money.

"Padadmaroh, next month I leave India forever. I have never killed a record boar. If you can show me one whose tushes are a fraction bigger than the record for this tent club, I will pay you a hundred rupees. I will pay another hundred if he falls to my spear."

Silence. Then the servant came with strong drink in two tall glasses. Jones drank. Larry O'Hara sipped his and, watching Major Jones' face, spilled the rest of it—as Padadmaroh noticed.

"Did you hear me?" Jones asked. 'Two hundred." Then in an undertone to Larry, "Dammit, I'd pay a thousand if I had to. I've had infernally bad luck. The only big pig that I ever rode and killed turned out to be a sow. One very big one that I actually touched got clear away; he jumped into a nullah that no horse could tackle. It's too bad to have to leave India without something decent to show for all my efforts. This looks like my opportunity."

O'Hara lighted a cigaret and answered in a low voice:

"He suggested, sir, that it was my pig. So of course I told him it's the club's—or words to that effect. It'd be a lark if we could all ride at the biggest pig on record."

Jones made a muttered remark of some kind, but when he spoke aloud his voice was well under control, although he sat bolt upright, as he did when playing cards.

"Where is this big boar, Padadmaroh?"

"Nay, nay. I was speaking with O'Hara sahib. When he was a little *butcha*—so big—not yet old enough to be sent oversea for his schooling, he would sit beside me and I used to tell him tales. So tonight I told him another, for the sake of my old memory—just such a tale as I used to tell him. Then I used to speak of boars as big as elephants, he being little, and all little ones enjoy big stories But tonight I only lied about a boar a little bigger than he could be, since O'Hara sahib is a grown man. Travelers have told me, sahib, that the little fishes take the big bait but that whales—whatever they are, for I never saw one—swallow only small things."

Jones stared hard at him, moving to see him better against the crimson glow of the camp-fire.

"So you were lying, eh? It is rare for a man of your race to admit he was lying."

"Maybe, sahib. But what of it? I am only an old man full of memories. When this O'Hara sahib was a *butcha,* and I told him tales, he used to set his chin a certain way and in his eyes was laughter like the wind at daybreak. So I wished to see if it was still there."

"Was it?" Jones asked.

"I am old. My eyes are not so keen as formerly. And it is dark," said Padadmaroh.

Jones thought a minute.

"Damn all this evasion," he said suddenly. "See here, my time's short, so I'll raise you. Five hundred rupees—that's a fortune for you—if a record boar falls to my spear within the next three days. I've heard of you. A lot of men have told me you're a wizard

at finding pig where no one else can. Go ahead then, and earn five hundred rupees."

PADADMAROH showed his few remaining stained teeth in a smile that wrinkled up toward his deepset eyes.

"That is a lot of money, sahib. But I do not need it."

Jones looked sidewise at O'Hara.

"Youngster, I believe you've already bribed him."

O'Hara made no comment.

"Let me tell you," Jones said sternly, "that it isn't etiquette, to put it mildly, for the youngest member of the club to do this kind of thing."

"What kind of thing?" O'Hara asked him.

"Bribing an old *shikarri* to reserve a big pig for your private spear."

"I just now heard you try to do it. I am sorry, sir, that good form and the regulations forbid my telling you to go to hell," said O'Hara. "This gentleman here"—he stressed the word—"is my personal friend. As soon as it's agreeable to you I'd like to talk with him alone."

"That's cheek," said Jones. "I'll make you pay for it." He got up. "It's damned impudence. I'll not forgive you for it. Good night."

There was silence until Jones had stalked away and vanished in his own tent.

"Padadmaroh, do you get the point of that?" O'Hara asked then. "What I wish you'd do is to guide the rest of them to that big pig, and I'll keep out of it. It isn't that I care a damn about the major, but I don't want it even hinted that I haven't played fair. I'll pretend I'm sick and can't ride."

"Nay, nay, sahib. Ride tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. If I know anything, I know this: that one is a *badmash*. Let me take his money. He will not dare not to pay me. I will bargain with him that the money shall be mine if I give him as much as a chance at such a great boar as I speak of. I will argue I know nothing of his skill, so he should pay me whether or not he is the first to prick that great boar. He will promise payment; but he will not believe me; he will watch you, thinking that you have bribed me first and therefore that I come deceiving him in order to protect your honor's honor."

"Listen, Padadmaroh. I don't give a damn what deal you drive with Major Jones. That's his lookout. I'll have nothing to do with it."

"But you will ride, sahib? Tomorrow? And the next day—and the next?"

"I'll ride, yes. But I want your promise not to flush that boar for my spear."

"Nay, indeed. Why should I? He might kill you." Padadmaroh stood up. "He has slain so many men he now thinks lightly of them. Stay with the ride, sahib. What does it matter to me who slays a gray boar?"

"Now you're talking rot," O'Hara answered. "Good night."

Padadmaroh bowed himself away into the darkness and O'Hara turned in, sleepless for a short time. So he saw through the open tent flap, by the candle-lantern burning in Jones' tent, the shadowy form of Padadmaroh silently approaching; and he saw Jones' tent flap open to admit him.

"Who was it said that everybody has a yellow streak?" he grumbled. "Dammit, some men can't be sportsmen, even though they've got guts. Jones has 'em. Curse him, what do I care if he steals one? Let him live with himself afterward. That's his business."

He fell asleep, and when his servant called him for the hurried breakfast before daybreak in the mess tent he had almost forgotten Jones and Padadmaroh. There was too much else to think about, and too much of the mystic madness that runs riot in the early Indian morning: wine of wonder, stirring the imagination; squeals, kicks, whinnying from the horse line; mauve and golden half-light and a wilderness emerging out of shadow; then a sunrise such as Zo-

roaster and the Parsees understood as symbolizing Life, full colored, golden, everlasting—splendid.

"Time, you fellows. Let's get underway before it warms up."

THERE were eight men. They divided into two rides, and the other rode off in a hurry to the southward where the beaters were already dinning in a maze of scrub to start a "sounder" of wild boar milling and preparing them for the stampede that should separate, at the right time, from their leader—reported to be a boar worth going after. Larry O'Hara was in Major Hickman's party, which included Jones and a man named Bingham, a civilian with a reputation: he had won the Guzerat Cup two years in succession. Bingham was the type of man who gets a little irritable when he finds himself in untried company: he rated Hickman as his equal, but he knew Jones for a second-rater; and since Larry O'Hara was an unknown quantity he was only barely civil to him.

"Why ride that mare?" he demanded. "She looks slower than a bullock. You'll be out of the running."

But O'Hara had chosen the Kathiawari with a trace of Percheron because he did not wish to thrust, that first day, too self-assertively. He knew that nothing under heaven is more irritating to an old hand than to have a youngster on a fast horse pass him and then bungle. Luck may favor any one, but laurels, in the long run, fall to him who bides his time and learns his game before he shows off. He forgot that Padadmaroh had advised him to select that mount. He did not think of Padadmaroh until Jones came cantering along behind him on a whaler and they trotted, side by side, behind the others. Jones was smiling. He kept stabbing with his spear at an imaginary mark, to get his eye in and his sinews limber.

"Just forget our talk last night, O'Hara," he said presently. "It'd spoil sport to remember it. I may have been a bit too ready to find fault."

O'Hara made his mare plunge, to gain a few seconds and get his face under control.

"As long as you don't think I accepted, or even thought of accepting Padadmaroh's offer," he answered.

Jones grew even more conciliatory.

"I don't doubt you. Fact is, you behaved damned well. I didn't. I was tempted. For a youngster like you, a trophy doesn't mean much—or it shouldn't. Your day will come. But this is my last chance. I'll never see this scene again. I'm off to live at Cheltenham and gossip with the other has-beens. They will lie like old women. I've a tiger skin. I'd like a record pair of tushes. Then I needn't listen to their lies. However, Padadmaroh's scheme was not good sportsmanship. I'm glad I dropped it."

O'Hara doubted him. It seemed he was protesting too much. He had seen Jones draw the tent flap to admit old Padadmaroh; and he knew that Padadmaroh was a man with Eastern notions as to what is fair play, and to whom five hundred rupees would be wealth.

"Look out for Padadmaroh. He may trick you if you listen to him," he suggested. "None of my affair, of course, but look out."

Jones flushed slightly. He resented advice from a junior. He glanced at O'Hara sharply as if, for a second, he suspected him of having seen Padadmaroh creep into his tent; but O'Hara was watching Hickman, captain of the ride; Hickman had drawn rein and was conning the landscape, choosing cover, waiting for the head *shikarri* to come running with information.

"Thanks, I don't think I need your advice," said Jones.

"Don't take it then," O'Hara answered. He cantered forward and drew rein by Hickman's stirrup.

The sun was well up, blazing like hot brass. Scrub, small clumps of trees, sheet-rock and dangerously broken plat-

eau fenced and fringed with prickly pear, lay etched around a dense grass thicket that was moving as if a million snakes made war within it. Men invaded it—a hundred of them, armed with sticks and tin cans—led by nearly nude enthusiasts whose ancestors, for possibly a thousand years, had earned their living at the heels of wild pig, heading them until they broke from cover. The head *shikarri*, sweating as he ran to Hickman's stirrup—bearded, ragged, filthy, with a turban like a coil of twisted lamp rags—spoke excitedly, without preliminaries:

"Great big sounder, sahib—many, many. Old boar, five, six year old—good one!"

Hickman pointed with his spear

"We'll take that cover downwind. Flush 'em just as soon as we're out of sight."

He led to a clump of thorn trees struggling for their lives in a thirsty undergrowth—a perfect screen; and before they reached it a din went up of shouts and crashing cans, set up by the beaters waist deep in the grass patch.

Hickman rammed his helmet down and edged his horse to the corner of the group of trees, to peer around it. All four horses fretted, snatching at their bits and kicking. Hickman, taking his spear in his bridle hand, made motions with his right for silence; all four horses instantly took that for orders to lay hoof to hard earth and go like the wind. There was a minute of staggering, snorting false start and an oath or two as Bingham's horse bucked wildly beneath him.

"There he goes!" said Hickman. "Here they all come! Give him time, or he'll turn."

A sounder of at least two hundred pigs broke cover, following a big boar scarred by half a hundred fights—sows grunting for their young, the young ones squealing—and the whole lot going like the shadow of a swift cloud.

"Good!" said Hickman. "He's a whopper."

TROUBLE again with the horses; they were savage, sweating, nervous to be off. They knew their business. So did the old gray boar. He heard them—understood. His business, as great-great-grandsire of the sounder was to lead out of danger and then turn and draw the enemy away until he could fight without risk of the sounder being trampled in the mêlée. Well out in front, where stout old captains should be, he saw Hickman—saw the others—grunted. That grunt was his trumpet blast. The sounder wheeled and scurried out of harm's way into dense, low jungle. But the gray boar carried on, and Hickman shouted—

"Ride!"

It is a good half second when the gate goes up on Epsom Downs and half a million throats on Derby Day explode exultantly "They're off!" It probably was not so bad in Rome when gladiators marched in for the *"Caesar salutamus!"* There are even moments in a modern bull fight when the ultimate of tenseness almost touches infinite reality, and life and death seem mingled in emotion. Those are nothing to the great game. There is no sport like it, and no adversary, barring gods and devils, half as great as a gray boar.

All four horses stuck their toes in and were off, O'Hara leading by a full length; it had been his luck to have the left end, nearest to the boar when Hickman shouted "Ride!" But he had no chance of holding that place. Hickman on a faster horse, then Bingham, and then Jones all passed him, racing neck-and-neck for first spear; for it does not count who slew the boar; whoever pricks him first and shows blood is the winner—owns the tushes. When a gray boar dies there is neither time nor opportunity to judge whose spear it was that sent his brave soul to the pigs' Valhalla. First blood has to be the deciding issue, and that makes for reckless riding.

But the boar knows even better than

a fox what sort of going punishes the horses. Warrior by instinct, he inevitably some day dies in battle; younger boars dispute his leadership; he holds it only until beaten, and he only yields it with his last breath. So he knows, too, under what conditions he can fight best—understands the value of surprise, of shock, of sudden change of tactics; and his strategy is equal to his courage.

Hickman and Bingham, neck-and-neck, rode furiously to force battle before the boar could gain the rocky, broken ground, a mile away, where the horses would be in difficulties and he at a huge advantage. One spear prick would bring him to bay. But the boar went like the wind—foam on his tushes, his angry little red eye glancing backward as he judged how much the enemy were gaining on him and selected rougher going to delay them.

Prickly pear made no impression on his tough hide, so he crashed it and the horses had to make a circuit. Ledges of rock that gave a horse no foothold were an easy stairway for him, so he scampered over them; the horsemen had to ride around and waste eternities of seconds looking for a path to follow. One of those rock ledges separated Hickman and Bingham, left and right. Jones pulled out to the right-hand after Bingham, and Larry O'Hara followed Jones, he hardly knew why, except that he supposed Jones would follow the easiest route, and Larry wished to save his own horse. He had time to wonder again why Padadmaroh had advised him to ride his strongest, slowest mount.

There came a moment when the boar was lost to view. The leaders checked to look for him, and Larry caught up. It was thirty seconds before Hickman saw the boar's back hurrying away beyond a low ridge. Hickman spurred off in pursuit with thirty lengths' advantage, and it looked like Hickman's pig so certainly that even Bingham granted it and slowed down, reserving his mare's strength and speed for the inevitable battle when the boar should turn at bay for the finish.

It was then, as he responded to Bingham's signal and took position, as the junior, in the worst place on the right flank, with Jones on Bingham's left, so that somebody could charge the boar whichever way he turned, that Larry saw Padadmaroh. The old man was beyond the boar, between two big rocks. There was no time to see what he did.

THE boar jinked suddenly to the right, took higher ground and vanished for a moment in a maze of low scrub. That put Larry in the lead, and Hickman out of it. So Larry's spurs went home as Jones and Bingham spread to either side and raced to overtake him. Hickman shouted, but no one could hear what he said. The boar burst suddenly from cover with his whole strength gathered under him and came at Larry, downhill—fifty feet to go, and all the fury of a redhot cannon ball.

Then man and horse were one, there being that which links them when the warhorse ancestry of one responds to exultation in the other. Neither horse nor man flinched. Larry's spear, held steady, met the boar midway. It took him full and fair between the shoulders as he rose to slash the horse's belly with his tushes. The mare reared and lashed out with her forefeet. The spear broke. The dying boar—no whit discouraged—charged the mare's hind legs, knocked them out from under her and set her reeling over backward. Larry rolled free just as Bingham's spear skewered the boar and finished him. Then Jones rode up and drew rein.

"Damn these Irishmen's luck!" he remarked.

"Three and three-quarter inch tushes is my guess. Damned good spear, O'Hara. Are you hurt at all?" asked Bingham.

Larry had caught his horse and was examining her hind legs.

"Nothing wrong with either of us. Not a scratch on the Begum. Knocked

her wind out, that's all; she'll be all right in a minute."

Hickman rode up.

"Neatly done, O'Hara! Good spear!"

Hickman examined Larry's mare and gave his verdict.

"Nothing wrong with her. Is she slow, or did you take it easy? Care to sell her? I'll buy, but I wouldn't part with her if I were you. A mare that fights back that way with her forefeet is a gem as long as she can gallop. Well —we've time for another pig before the heat glare sets in."

Padadmaroh came up on an old gray donkey, grinning. Hickman recognized him.

"Did you see that, Padadmaroh?"

"Not bad, sahib. It was not bad. But it was no test. I have seen a thousand sahibs who would not have failed then. This boar was a good one, but he had no cunning—none to speak of."

Hickman stared at Padadmaroh, then at Larry.

"Did you turn him?" he demanded.

"Nay, nay, sahib. Who could turn a boar like that one?"

"How did you come to be here, at the finish?"

"Sahib, I know all this countryside. And I know pig. There was no other way that he *would* take, seeing how the wind blow sand the way they drove his sounder out of cover. Come more horses? I took thought to bring spears in case any should break."

"Horses and spears should be here in a minute," said Hickman. "However, that was thoughtful of you. Where are the spears? O'Hara sahib needs one."

Padadmaroh gestured toward the two great rocks behind which Larry had seen him lurking. Larry eyed him curiously. Then he mounted.

"Let me see the spears."

So Padadmaroh climbed up on his old gray donkey and Larry followed him, walking his mare for the sake of her slowly recovering wind. Padadmaroh kept the donkey's rump beneath the mare's nose, talking over his shoulder.

"It was the spear that I dreaded, sahib. I have brought a stout one. Those that I saw in camp last night are no good."

"Damn you, did you turn that boar?" asked Larry.

"Nay, nay, sahib. Who could turn him? But he smelled the burning undergrowth beyond him that the sun set fire to."

"Sun isn't strong enough yet," O'Hara answered.

"It has burned since yesterday."

"You liar."

"Just a little burning; not a big one, sahib. Had that boar been cunning—but he was not, and I knew it—he would have tried to set that fire between him and pursuit. Look yonder—I have men who beat the fire out."

There were twenty men, hard at it, shoveling dust and beating down the fire with strips of *kaskas* matting. It was an irregular patch of thorns and coarse grass, isolated by a quarter-mile of sheet rock. Let alone, it would have burned itself out in an hour or two.

"Here are the spears," said Padadmaroh. "Try their weight and choose one. They are all sharp. They are all strong."

"Twenty men at work, and all that smoke, would turn a dozen boars," said Larry. He was angry, but he chose a spear because he liked the heft of it. "If I prove you set that fire—"

"Yes, sahib—then what?"

LARRY O'HARA held his tongue. He knew he would do nothing. He suspected Jones of having made a bargain with Padadmaroh. He suspected Padadmaroh of deliberate intention to deceive Jones and to take his money. But to go to Hickman and accuse either of them was out of the question. Even given proof, it would be better to let the problem work itself out than to spoil a morning's sport by making a scene. If Jones were guilty of bad sportsmanship, as he suspected, in attempting to reserve, by trickery, the

best boar for his own spear, let Jones carry on. Then let him clear his conduct—if, as, and how he could. If he could not, who cared? Jones was leaving India, to be forgotten.

"Let me alone, do you hear?' he commanded. "I don't want your interference."

Padadmaroh grinned back.

"That the sahib will not ride unfairly is a good sign. But the signs are nothing when the trial comes."

"Confound you! What damned right have you to try me, as you call it?"

Padadmaroh kept on grinning and his old eyes glittered.

"Do you see this, sahib?" He produced a boar's tush from within the folds of a filthy loin cloth. It was a very old one, carved into the semblance of a local godlet such as old *shikarris* sometimes carry for the sake of good luck. "I said to the general *bahadur* I will send this to him when his son shall have cut his eye-teeth. See—" he produced a metal box and opened it—"behold his writing."

On a stamped and folded strong brown envelop was written General O'Hara's name and his address in Ireland.

"It was two boars—two at once—that tried your father, sahib; and my father saw it."

"See here—" Larry O'Hara's Irish temper changed to laughter suddenly, as the weather does in Ireland. "Damn your impudence, I don't mind being tested, as you call it, but I won't have other fellows' sport spoiled."

"Do they matter, sahib?"

"Yes, dammit. Bring those other spears along. Today, tomorrow and the next day we ride four in company. If you want to, on the fourth day, you may raise hell."

Padadmaroh nodded.

"Does the sahib think that troubles come like the ter-r-rain by signal? It is the unexpected that discovers weakness. It is only weakness that betrays a man. All other qualities are good, in one way or another."

"Wait until I'm free to go alone with you."

No answer. Larry turned his mare and trotted back to his companions. He found them fuming. There were no spare horses in sight, although runners had come to cut the tushes from the dead boar, so that evidently some one knew which way to take.

"I'd ride this horse again," said Hickman, "but he's split a hoof. It's nothing serious, but—"

Bingham nodded.

"It's against all the law and the prophets to stick a lame horse into it. This isn't a bull fight. I'll wait with you."

"Anything wrong with your horse?" Hickman answered. "Would you care to go and look for the remounts? Probably they're not far off. If you hurry them we might have time to get a second pig."

Bingham rode off. Hickman turned to Padadmaroh.

"Where are the beaters? What's the matter with them? Which cover do they draw next?"

"God knows, sahib."

Jones spoke up then. He avoided Larry's eyes, or seemed to. And to Larry, who suspected him, it seemed he spoke for Padadmaroh's ears as much as any one's:

"It's late already. Remounts must have gone off in the wrong direction. It'll be noon before they get here. Do you care if I go on alone? My last chance, don't you know. You other fellows'll have scores of opportunities."

"Won't you be here tomorrow?" Hickman asked him.

"No, I'm leaving by the night train. Too bad, but I have to."

Hickman pulled his helmet off and wiped his forehead.

"All right. You and O'Hara go together. I'll wait here for Bingham. Padadmaroh probably can show you where some pig are. Good luck."

"Thanks, I'm staying," said O'Hara.

"Oh, all right," said Jones, and rode off. "Come on, Padadmaroh."

Padadmaroh followed on his old gray donkey, glancing backward. He was holding three spears and he looked like Don Quixote's servant.

"That's a damned strange thing," said Hickman. "Looks like prearrangement. Jones leads off—guide following—Jones in a hurry and guide apparently reluctant. Dammit, that man Jones is not notorious for sportsmanship. I've heard of men who won't play cards with him. Do you suppose he's bribed that damned old scoundrel Padadmaroh to provide him with a pig all to himself?"

"I couldn't say," O'Hara answered. "Would you care to ride my mare, sir, and go after him? I'll hold your horse and wait for Major Bingham."

"No, no. Go and bring Padadmaroh back here."

PADADMAROH made no trouble about turning back. He seemed to have expected it. He made his donkey trot behind O'Hara's mare, and when he drew rein he saluted Hickman with a soldierly sideswipe of the right hand that was almost impudent.

"See here," said Hickman, "was it you who sent our remounts in the wrong direction?"

"Sahib, what have I to do with remounts?"

"Where are you taking Major Jones?"

"He takes me—into danger, sahib. He has ground his eye-teeth into powder on the mess cook's chicken bones. And now he looks for false ones for his old age."

"That'll do," said Hickman. He, no more than Larry, cared to inquire too deeply. "What did you look back for just now, when the major ordered you to follow?"

"Sahib, I looked back for what might be. My plans have gone wrong. I am too old; I no longer plan well."

"Tell us."

Padadmaroh for a moment watched the brown kites circling tirelessly above the carcass of the slain boar.

"Yonder, below, in the *ghat,*" he said then, "near where the ancient ruins lie in jungle that is difficult to enter, is a boar of boars. He learned of it."

"You meant that boar for us?" asked Hickman.

"Not I, sahib. But for this one. And he would not."

Hickman stared hard at O'Hara. Padadmaroh talked on, shrewdly eyeing both men.

"Now my trouble is that he—that other one—it was he, sahib, who sent the remounts to the wrong place—"

"Did he give the order?"

"Nay, he ordered me to give it. Now my trouble is that he will find that boar; for I have told him where to find it. I am an old man and my plans creak louder than my old bones! I would have cut this sahib's eye-teeth. But instead, I send a man who does not matter to a man's death that he never earned!"

Then Hickman laughed into O'Hara's eyes.

"Go on, O'Hara. Follow Jones," he ordered. "I'll stay here. As soon as Bingham comes we'll be hard at your heels." He laughed at Padadmaroh. "You go with O'Hara sahib. Lead him to that boar ahead of Major Jones if you can do it."

So O'Hara rode off, slowly because the donkey had to follow. Fifteen minutes passed, and it was hotter than the hinges of the lid of Tophet when he came to the edge of the *ghat* and stared down into what appeared to be impenetrable jungle. It was a well known *ghat,* where once a temple stood that archæologists dispute about in terms of baffled bigotry because it fits no period. Three hundred feet below, a mile wide, lay a dark green jungle, and no entrance to it save the winding narrow track on which the hoof-prints of Jones' horse showed distinctly. Padadmaroh halted his donkey at O'Hara's stirrup.

"Looks like tiger country," said

O'Hara, surveying the valley.

"Yes, there was a tiger, sahib. But the great boar slew him, as I told you. Down there in the valley bottom there is rich earth, full of roots that pigs love. There is a wallow, where the temple pool was formerly; it is fed by cold springs."

"It's a wild boar's heaven and a madman's hunting ground," O'Hara answered. "Where's the room to ride a boar, if we should see him?"

"There are many open spaces, sahib. Some are clearings made by peasants who desired the rich earth. But they were driven away by the tiger. And then the boar came; and they say the boar is something not of this world."

O'Hara wiped the sweat off his face with his shirt sleeve and then shielded his eyes with his right arm, gazing downward. And because the spear was in his right hand it was something like a gesture of salute toward the kites, that circled slowly, waiting for death.

"I see Jones," he said then. "Come on."

Downward, on a mare as nervous as a filly; she could feel O'Hara's tenseness, and the smell of jungle filled her nostrils full of prehistoric terrors that a horse inherits and a man, for lack of understanding, labels instinct. Downward, until trees began to make a canopy that baffled sunlight, and a dim gloom, and an eery silence, tortured senses that O'Hara had hardly guessed he owned.

Then suddenly he heard Jones—then he saw him trying angrily to govern a distracted horse that grew quiet, although it trembled, when O'Hara's mare entered the clearing. Sudden sunlight blinded O'Hara for a moment; he could not see Jones' face until Jones had spoken.

"Quite impossible to ride a pig here. I was hoping to find some open country. Why did you come?"

Then O'Hara saw him—gray gilled, mastering himself, but needing all his will, and none of it to spare.

"Hickman and Bingham are coming too," O'Hara answered.

Horse and mare rubbed noses, drawing comfort from each other. Padadmaroh on his donkey drew near. Jones snatched at a weak man's remedy and cursed him.

"Damn your eyes, you told me there was decent going down here!"

"Nay. But I said a great boar lives here and a man might ride him."

"You're a fool," Jones answered. "Let's turn back, O'Hara. What's the use of making idiots of ourselves?"

O'Hara grinned. It was the grin that signifies a number has been hoisted and it won't come down again until the winning post is passed. Then suddenly both horses reared and plunged into the jungle. There was something moving in the undergrowth that terrified them—something on the far side of the clearing. It took a minute of strenuous horsemanship to make them face it, but the donkey took no notice. Padadmaroh sat still on the donkey, staring at the thicket whence the sound of movement came.

"Pig," he said quietly when the horsemen had come close enough to hear him. "He was rooting. Now he goes back to his own place. Listen."

There were sounds of something thrusting through the jungle; no grunt—until suddenly a heavy animal went crashing away in the gloom. Padadmaroh spoke again.

"He is cunning. Here he will not show fight because he is not sure yet that a fight is necessary. But in his own place he is like a dog whose kennel is invaded."

"Where's that?" asked O'Hara.

"In the temple ruins. Follow that track, sahib."

"Come on," said O'Hara, spurring forward.

"Damned young idiot!" said Jones.

But he could hardly turn back when a younger man went forward; neither could he hold his horse, that craved company. He followed, drenched with sweat and swearing to relieve his own nerves.

LARRY O'HARA mastered his by mastering the mare. He petted her; he made her conscious of the bit; he let her feel the reassuring fact that there was some one on her back who liked, and needed her, and presently would challenge forth her strength. So, though they rode in dim gloom, in a silence that was like the solid matrix of which silences are made, that mare became a unit, once more, with her rider—no more timid, and no less, than he was.

Then another clearing. Jones overtook O'Hara and recovered more of his self-esteem by the timeworn process of rebuking a junior.

"I haven't heard," he said, "of any new rule giving subalterns the right to lead their seniors. The impudence of some of you young officers is nothing less than piggish!"

"Lead, then," said O'Hara, and he drew rein until Jones had passed him.

Jones, too, had mastered his horse; but he had done it by the iron handed method that imposes untrusting obedience. The horse went forward at the touch of Jones' spurs, but two-thirds of the rider's attention was engaged in managing his mount and when they plunged again into the jungle gloom it was a slow procession. Padadmaroh, on the nerveless donkey, trotted behind and kept up easily.

The heat was stifling. Men and horses sweated so that even the merciless flies could hardly cling and sting; they merely irritated. Larry O'Hara kept drying the palm of his hand on his riding breeches, so that the spear should not slip when he gripped it. Jones rode slowly, and more slowly as the gloom grew deeper, following an ancient road whose stones lay pulled and twisted out of place by roots of trees. Whenever his horse stumbled he swore irritably. It was vastly worse to follow him than to ride alone; he inspired no confidence, he merely drew attention to his lack of it.

O'Hara gave him ten lengths' lead. He was at least that distance to the rear when the sunlight burst again through thinning branches and a clearing—several acres of it—showed where the archæologists had camped and dug. Old temple ruins lay in chaos in the midst, beside a mud swamp.

"Kabadah!"

That was Padadmaroh's voice. The mare was on her toes before the warning reached O'Hara's ears. Jones' horse spun around and bolted, coming straight back, headlong. There was no room. But a gray boar—so huge he was fabulous—so swift and sudden he was like a gray ghoul glimpsed in nightmare—crashed Jones' horse and spilled his legs from under him. The fall pitched Jones into a thicket. The boar savaged at the horse and ripped his entrails—worried into him and slew him. Larry couched his spear and rammed his spurs in; charged, aiming at the boar's eye—missed it—struck his shoulder. But the boar jinked to defend himself. The spear slipped, sweat wet. Stung, infuriated, fighting mad—the gray boar skewered himself. He thrust against the spear; pain goaded him to reach and gore his adversary. And the spear kept slipping while the staggering mare reared and struck out with her forefeet.

Those three seconds were eternity. So scarred by tiger claws that one huge tush lay naked to the roots, his ear torn and his flanks still scabby from the half healed battle wounds, his little red eyes burning with the boar lust that will yield to nothing less than death, the huge brute struggled forward, grunting. The mare lunged. The spear slipped. Suddenly the boar jinked for a flank attack, so that the spear was across the mare's throat.

There was nothing for it then but to escape. O'Hara let the spear go, shouted, spurred and rode wildly toward the clearing. And the boar came after him, the long spear sticking upward at an angle. He came as fast as the mare could gallop. Should she stumble on a

loose rock, slip, meet something that she could not jump—death then, swift and savage on the froth foul tushes.

Nothing for it but to make a circuit of the ruins, full pelt, looking out for masonry half hidden amid creepers. Gallop around the ruins and then down the jungle path to Padadmaroh for another spear. But the boar took short cuts—gaining, gaining. And something was wrong with the mare; she had strained a tendon when a loose stone slipped from under her. The boar leaped on a pile of masonry. He stood there for a second frothing at the mouth. He shook himself to get rid of the spear. No escaping him now. He was in the center; he could cut that segment of a circle anywhere he pleased. And only one chance then: to snatch that spear and try to drive it home into his vitals—one chance in a billion!

THE boar charged. Battle madness blazed up in him. Larry wheeled his mare and turned back by the way he came; that gave him ten more yards' advantage because the boar shot past his mark, and stood and shook the spear again before he followed. There was one more billion-to-one chance. Padadmaroh might—

He had! The damned old rogue had chanced it! He had followed. He had stuck two spears into the ground ten paces from the track mouth. He was up a tree now, yelling, pointing. But the mare could hardly gallop. Larry spurred her, shouted to her, rode her as a jockey rides a Derby winner. He snatched a spear and spun her around to face the boar again. There was a short split-second then. He had to couch the spear like lightning; couch it short—the boar was too close, rising at the mare's off-shoulder.

But his point struck straight between the great brute's shoulder blades, and that spear did not slip. The butt of the other spear struck O'Hara on the jaw bone as the mare rose on her hind legs, frantic. That, and the shock of the boar's impact as the spear went through his lungs and down into his vitals, sent them reeling, rider and mare together, over backward. Larry scrambled to his feet and let the mare go. He was thinking of that other spear, still in the ground. He was half stunned, breathless. Sweat was in his eyes; he could not see the spear, although he could hear Padadmaroh shouting.

Then he saw Jones walk out from the jungle path and pull the spear out of the ground. He thought that Jones was coming to defend him. It was only then that he got the sweat out of his eyes, and looked, and saw the great boar lying dead.

"My first blood," Jones said calmly. "When he charged me in the jungle I thrust out behind me and just got him with the spear point. So I'll take those tushes."

"Can you show blood?" Larry asked him.

Jones was bending down examining the dead boar.

"Yes, yes. What a monster! He's a record—or I'll eat him! Five-inch tushes! Yes, you'll find my spear beside the dead horse; there's only a speck of blood on it. But look here—do you see where my point went in?"

He was standing again, prodding at the hard earth with the point of the spear he had pulled from the ground, entirely unaware that Padadmaroh had been watching him. The old man had approached as silently as death's own shadow.

Suddenly the jungle echoed to the sound of hoofbeats. Some one shouted, and another answered. Nemesis came galloping into the clearing in the form of Hickman on a fresh horse.

"Damn the luck again!" he shouted. "Whose pig? God, what a whopper!" He rode nearer.

"My O'Hara sahib's pig," said Padadmaroh.

Jones looked ugly.

"My pig."

Bingham cantered up.

"Oh, damn my rotten stars! Is that your pig, O'Hara? Good man!"

"My pig," Jones repeated. "I drew first blood."

Padadmaroh spoke then.

"But I saw the Major sahib dip his spear point in the blood that trickled from the dead horse. And I saw him just now make a spear mark on the boar's snout. After that he wiped the blood off this spear thus—by sticking it into the earth repeatedly."

Jones flared.

"I never heard such lies! If you weren't nearly old enough to die of rot, I'd thrash you."

Hickman interrupted.

"Larry O'Hara, what do you say?"

"Pig's mine," Larry answered. "Case of nerves, I think. The major isn't quite himself. I've noticed it."

Jones flared again.

"Do you mean to say that you'll take that damned *shikarri's* word against mine?"

"It's O'Hara's pig," said Hickman.

"But the Major sahib pays me my rupees, because the bargain was," said Padadmaroh, "that I only had to show him where the boar was."

"Damn you, you may go to hell," Jones answered.

"Are you going by tonight's train?" Hickman asked him. "You'll need time to pack your things, so don't let us detain you. Goodby."

"I have no horse."

"You will meet the syces on your way. They'll have your spare horse with them. We will send a man back to the camp with your saddle and bridle. There's a dining room at the railway station, in case you'd prefer not to dine with the mess."

"You men are cads," Jones answered. "Cads, the lot of you." He walked off, slowly, trying to look dignified.

"And so I lose my money," Padadmaroh grumbled, but his grumble's edge was meshed into wide grin. "Who cares? I have cut O'Hara sahib's eye-teeth! He is blooded. He has met death. Chota O'Hara sahib, will you mail this to the general *bahadur?*"

He produced his envelop, unfolded it, inserted the old carved boar's tush, sealed it, held it to his forehead, bowed, and gave it—it was something like a god to him—to Larry.

"Sahib, give the general *bahadur* the salaams of Padadmaroh."

A Story of the Sea

The ALIEN

By BILL ADAMS

SOME might consider him an idiot. Probably most men would regard him so. But, despite the man's folly, idiot seems to me too strong a word. He was certainly no idiot. His conduct was assuredly foolish; and yet, except that all men are to some extent fools, he was no fool. Otherwise men would not unquestioningly have accepted him as their leader in emergency, would not so readily have bent to his will. He was courageous. You say that fools are often courageous, that often it is courage itself that stamps a man as a fool. But did you ever meet a fool who was at all times completely deliberate, devoid of passion? He was obsessed with one passion, it is true, but it was a passion that never adversely affected the fortunes of others. In his folly he suffered alone.

I recall the epithet bestowed on him by the comrades of his youth. They dubbed him Queer-fellow, spoke of him as a rummy duck. Of those comrades I was one. But, whereas to others he was a mystery, to me he was simple enough; for I was his friend. He hon-

ored me with his friendship. I call it honor today, glad that he confided in me. That he did so was perhaps only a matter of chance. I wish I knew where he was today.

One must go back to the earliest beginnings of this man so alien to the rest of us.

His father, a poor schoolmaster, taught the children of cotton mill workers in the outskirts of Manchester; a dry fellow in whose life had never been so much as a touch of adventure. I had glimpses of him—spindly, with a thin though somewhat bushy reddish beard and hair that was ever unkempt. His one leg being a trifle shorter than the other, he walked with a rolling limp, so that had you at a distance seen his head and shoulders in a crowd you might possibly have taken him for a sailor. But his face was the face of an ascetic. His clothes were always the same. A smooth black suit showing signs of long wear. He was a bony handed man, born to poverty.

Until her marriage, the boy's mother had worked behind a milliner's counter. In her youth she must have been pretty. It would have been a doll-like prettiness. When I saw her she was fat. A short, pudgy woman. She was some ten years older than the schoolmaster, whom she revered utterly. His word was law to her. To her no whim of his was whim. A woman without will of her own, he was as a prophet to her; a man to marvel.

"People don't appreciate him," she told me once in a confiding moment. "They don't understand him," she added.

Any one could understand him. An embittered man. Had he been an American he would in all likelihood have been a wandering revivalist, damning in a loud voice the evils of liquor. Liquor was his pet abomination. The boy, her only child, took second place in her affections. It was the father that was the apple of her eye, her heart's entire desire. The boy adored them both, for he was by nature of a loving disposition.

To his parents the boy was as a boy set apart from all other boys. They reared him sternly. Perhaps sternly is too strong a word; for having from his infancy been taught instant obedience he gave obedience so freely that sternness was uncalled for. Being of a tractable nature, having acquired that characteristic from his mother, the strictness of his upbringing gave birth to no rebelliousness in him. He obeyed them unquestioningly.

Being very poor, the family knew no pleasures beyond the simple pleasures of the home. Home was a world unto itself, to each of them.

Unfailingly, before every meal, the schoolmaster asked a blessing. Before retiring at night he held family prayers. On Sunday they always attended church together, a noncomformist church the denomination of which I have forgotten. All ritual was an abomination to the schoolmaster. Had he been an American he would, perhaps, have founded a new sect. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate," was a favorite text of his. But he was English to the backbone, and proud of it. An extraordinary mixture of patriot and religious crank.

Next to his God came his king. But for his lame leg he might perhaps have been a soldier, and would then, without any doubt, have become at least a sergeant and, had occasion come his way, would have cheerfully led a forlorn hope to perish at the foot of the foemen's ramparts. There was never a more patriotic home. Beyond the seas that bound the schoolmaster's island was no land that might compare with it.

On weekday evenings, particularly during the long evenings of Winter, the schoolmaster read aloud while the boy's mother sewed. Reading of Clive in India, of Wolfe upon the Heights of Abraham, of generals who ever led their troops to victory, G. A. Henty was a favorite author. Marlborough, Wellington, Richard of the Lion Heart were

household names. But the most favored of all tales were such as told of England's victories upon the sea. Nelson was well known to the boy ere he was yet twelve. The exploits of Anson, of Blake, of Rodney, the tale of the Armada, the deeds of Drake, Raleigh, Frobisher and Grenville were all familiar.

On the walls of the poor parlor were cheap prints of Nelson at Copenhagen with the telescope to his blind eye, of Nelson dying in the *Victory's* cockpit; of the little *Revenge,* shot torn and crippled, surrounded by the galleons of Spain that she had dared to defy. Of all heroes, Grenville was the boy's favorite. By night he often dreamed that he was a sea captain, with the flag of England flying above him, with the enemy's shells screaming by.

THE BOY looked utterly commonplace. A lean, red headed lad with pale blue eyes and a quiet voice. A little dreamy looking, perhaps; of a retiring disposition. In school he was never at the head and never at the foot of his class. A plodder. Owing to the fact that his father was their master, and unsympathetic with hot youth, other lads were hesitant in chumming with him. He sought no friends, and if he made enemies he made them involuntarily. When occasionally, goaded beyond endurance, he fought, he did so just as he studied; doggedly—giving blows without hate, taking blows with quiet endurance and infinite patience.

"Hard to lick," his mates said of him, for he could stand up under more punishment than any other lad in the school. Though he might easily have been either, he was neither popular nor unpopular. Once when a much larger boy spoke disparagingly of his father he attained a brief popularity by soundly thrashing the taunter. It was his one aggressive fight. Because he appeared to be so completely indifferent to the popularity that he then came by, the popularity quickly faded. But a measure of respect remained.

When he was sixteen the boy's father, laying down a book at the end of the evening, asked him—

"What do you mean to do when you leave school, my son?"

At her son's reply the mother started. He said—

"I want to go to sea."

The schoolmaster also started at his son's answer. It had never occurred to him that his own flesh and blood might desire that adventure that had been withheld from himself. Picturing his son thrown among the rough, hard living men of the sea, he thought for a moment to say no. He gazed long and steadily at his son. Standing beneath a print of Grenville dying upon the deck of the Spanish flagship, the boy gazed unflinchingly back at him. The evening's reading had been Tennyson's poem of the *Revenge.* Grenville's dying words were still in the lad's ears, seemed still to hover in the air of the little parlor.

"I have only done my duty, as a man is bound to do. With a joyful spirit I, Sir Richard Grenville, die!"

The boy broke the silence.

"Some day I might be a captain in the navy, father," said he.

Again the schoolmaster started. His own flesh and blood a captain in the navy! The thought stirred him to the depths.

While the woman remained silent, father and son talked far into the night. The boy's mind was made up that he must some day be a captain in the navy. But for him to enter the navy as a midshipman and thus set his foot upon the first step toward a captaincy was impossible. His father lacked the means. The sole alternative was that he enter the merchant service, whence, in time, he might be able to enter the naval service by way of the reserve.

There were two ways by which a lad might enter the merchant service. He might start as an ordinary seaman, in which case he would live among the foremast seamen and from the first

draw a small wage. Or he might go as an apprentice, in which case he would live abaft the mainmast in the apprentices' quarters. To go as an ordinary seaman would cost nothing beyond the necessary sea clothing. To go as an apprentice he must pay a premium of thirty pounds, which would be paid back in annual instalments. While he would draw no pay whatever, he would be less exposed to the company of the rough men of the forecastle.

A MONTH after his sixteenth birthday the boy went aboard a full rigged ship in Liverpool as one of her three apprentices. To provide the thirty pounds had taken most of his father's savings.

The schoolmaster was at the pierhead to see the ship sail.

"You will remember the last words of Grenville," he said, bidding his son goodby. "You will see that you keep your conscience always clear. Remember your father and do nothing to bring me shame."

The boy gripped his father's hand.

"I will remember you always, father," he answered.

The ship was bound to New York in ballast, there to load a cargo of case oil for the Yalu River, China. It was Winter and bitterly cold. A couple of hours after the tugboat dropped her at nightfall the ship was struck by a squall of intense violence. All hands were called on deck. The darkness was impenetrable. Some of the sails blew to ribbons at the squall's first onslaught. In the space of a few moments she was laboring in a heavy sea, her rigging swept by invisible sprays. Invisible seas, now knee deep, now waist deep, surged from side to side of her rolling decks. It was a night in which none but experienced seamen could be of any use.

Hurrying forward, the mate paused at the door of the apprentices' quarters whence the three boys were just emerging.

"You boys can stay below," he shouted. "It's not safe for such as you to be on deck in this." Then he was gone.

Heedless of the proffered opportunity to escape the sea's harsh baptism, the boy stepped from the door and joined the sailors. No one saw him. For a long time no one knew of his presence. When he was swept from his feet by a boarding wave and bruised against a hatch, no one knew of it. When the order came to go aloft, to ascend the madly rolling masts and secure the threshing sails, he struggled into the rigging and contrived to make his way up.

Upon the spars he was naturally of little help, but continually in the way of those who swung upon the swaying footropes. Again and again he was cursed by the hardened sailors among whom he toiled so ineffectually.

The first dim light of dawn was opening when, with all but two of the ship's thirty sails furled, the order was given for the second mate's watch to go below. The boy was in the mate's watch. The mate's watch, who had had no wink of sleep throughout the long night, must still stay on deck till eight o'clock.

The boy was coiling up a rope when the mate noticed him. His face was drawn and white. He was shivering. His palms were a mass of blisters from the unaccustomed work of pulling on ropes.

"No need for you to come on deck yet," shouted the mate.

The boy did not hear him.

"Look at that kid, Mister," said the mate to the second mate. "I told the apprentices to stay below last night and they may as well stay below awhile yet. Tell that lad he don't need to be on deck if he don't want to."

The second mate had been aloft with the men during the night. He had heard them cursing an apprentice. Unaware that the mate had told the three boys that they might remain below, he had taken it for granted that the other two were staying there because they were

afraid—as indeed they were. Now he turned to the mate.

"That lad was on deck all night, sir," he said.

The mate called the boy to him.

"Didn't you hear me tell you you could stay below, Taffir?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

The mates glanced understandingly at each other. Then the mate said:

"All right. Go ahead and get those ropes coiled up."

The boy returned to his work.

"He's got good stuff in him, Mister," said the mate.

"Aye, sir. He's the breed," said the second mate.

When the boy at last went below at eight o'clock the other two apprentices were lying awake in their bunks, where they had slept all night. Both had been to sea before, had made a short voyage during which they had experienced nothing but fine weather.

"Didn't you hear the mate say we could stay below?" asked one.

Suddenly overcome by seasickness, the boy turned and hurried back to the deck. When he re-entered the half-deck one of the others had fetched breakfast from the cook's galley. Weary beyond words, weak from toil and seasickness, he crept into his bunk and fell instantly asleep. The others ate his share of the scant meal as well as their own.

"He must have heard the mate," said one.

"He must be a damned fool," said the other.

Throughout her passage to New York the ship experienced continual storm. The other two apprentices, both of whom came from well-to-do homes, continually groused, and taking advantage of the easy going natures of the two mates, shirked hardship whenever opportunity offered. Taffir shirked nothing.

The others taunted him, accusing him of trying to curry favor with the mates. He took their sarcasm in silence. Because he was the youngest of the three, they ordered him to keep the apprentices' quarters clean, to fetch the food from the cook's galley and to take the empty mess kids back at each meal. They nagged him constantly. Paying no heed to their pettiness, so eager to learn the profession of a seaman that he scarce noticed it, he did all that they told him to do without complaint.

When at the end of three weeks the vessel arrived in New York one of the other apprentices immediately deserted her. During the week that she was in port the other, provided with pocket money by his parents, came aboard drunk every night. Having no money to spend, and in any case too much interested in ships to care about seeing the sights of the strange city, Taffir spent his evenings in writing letters to his parents and in wandering about the wharves. In his letters he made no mention of the other apprentices, and none whatever of the hardships that he had endured during the passage across the Atlantic. Though he had suffered horribly from cold, though he had been wet through for the greater part of the time, and always famished with hunger, he assured them that he liked the sea and that he meant to become a captain at the earliest possible opportunity.

A WEEK after the ship sailed for China the other apprentice fell overboard while furling a sail at night. The ship was brought to a stop. A boat was lowered. The night was dark, without stars. Taffir helped to lower the boat and when she was gone stood with the sailors peering into the surrounding darkness. After more than two hours the boat returned without having found the one who had fallen.

When the ship was on her way again the captain sat in the chartroom with his head bowed in his hands. The mates stared gloomily back to the darkness astern. Gathered in the forecastle, the sailors spoke in low voices. Solemn

eyed, they talked of disasters that they had known upon the sea, of the uncertainty of a sailor's life, of death in many forms.

"Only one out o' three left i' the half-deck," said one of the sailors. "That lad'll be lonesome now. This voyage'll be his last. He'll quit when she gits back to Liverpool."

"Aye," said another. "Nights o' this sort's enough to break any lad's nerve."

But alone in the little half-deck Taffir undressed with steady fingers and, having got into his bunk, fell immediately asleep—to dream that he was a naval captain with the flag of England flying above him. Thenceforward he ate alone, slept alone, had none with whom to converse in the short dog-watches after the day's work was done, dwelt utterly without companionship in his watches below: for an apprentice to mingle with the foremast sailors was against sea law. When now and again one or the other of the mates looked in upon him during the dog watch they found him bent above the table, studying navigation books.

"The boy's a sailor from the feet up," they said of him.

Soon after leaving New York the ship ran into fine weather. Taffir was set by the mate to help now one and now another of the sailors in the rigging during his watch on deck. The men had noticed his uncomplaining ways, had seen his steady courage. Won by those attributes and observing his eagerness to learn, they took pleasure in teaching him the tricks of their calling.

His body was already growing hard, his frame filling out. He learned to splice, to knot, to furl, to reef, to steer; and when the ship arrived at the mouth of the Yalu he had already acquired more sea knowledge than usually falls to the lot of an apprentice until he has been a year or two at sea. Aware of and taken by his simplicity, delighted with his complete unsophistication, the roughest of the crew usually refrained from ribald talk in his presence.

Because the ship lay at anchor off the mouth of the Yalu and discharged her cargo into lighters the boy left China without having set foot ashore. From China she proceeded to Santa Rosalia on the west coast of South America, in ballast again; and, arriving there, loaded a cargo of guano for Liverpool. Since there was no wharf at Santa Rosalia her cargo was brought off in lighters, and the boy again left port without having set foot ashore. Some twelve months after leaving it he returned to his home hard limbed and sturdy, but well nigh as unsophisticated as he had left it.

HAVING been beset with doubts, the schoolmaster was delighted to find his son the same lad to whom he had bidden goodby a year ago. During the week that the boy was at home life in the simple home was much as it had always been. By day he talked to his mother of the wonders of the sea, told her of whales, of flying fish, of islands passed and of strange people seen; tried to explain to her puzzled ears the handling of a ship—but he avoided all mention of the perils of his calling. During the evenings, when the schoolmaster was at home, he told the same things over; or listened readily to his father reading old tales, and descanting upon the greatness of England. The schoolmaster was now as much set upon the lad's becoming a naval captain as was the lad himself. Evening by evening he held family prayers and, fanatical as ever, raved of the evils of strong drink, exhorting his son, warning him against ever putting liquor of any sort to his lips.

After a week at home the boy received orders to join another ship. On going aboard her he found that he was one of eight apprentices, all of whom had been at sea for from one to three years. The ship was going to sea on the following morning. He joined her just after dark, when the other apprentices were dressing to go ashore, and

was immediately invited to go ashore with one of them. It was then that I met him. It was I who invited him to go ashore with me. My knowledge of his first voyage came to me in later days, in part from him, in part from the second mate of his first ship who lived close to my home, in part from one of our crew, an elderly sailor who had been a member of his first ship's forecastle crowd.

I suggested that we take in a theater. We had just time to get there before the performance started. He assented, though apparently without enthusiasm. Though he had never been to a theater before, he watched the performance disinterestedly, talking to me continually in undertones of his last voyage or asking me questions about my previous voyages. His sole interest appeared to be ships. It was plain that he was filled with ambition to attain the heights of his calling.

On our way back aboard we passed a public house that was still open. I said—

"Let's go in and have a drink."

He assented. Save for the barmaid the place was empty. I asked for a glass of whisky and inquired what he would have. He replied—

"A glass of milk."

The barmaid, a pretty girl with full lips and bold black eyes, smiled and answered—

"We haven't any milk."

"How about some ginger ale?" I asked him.

He declined. If he could not have milk he wanted nothing. As we left the place I caught the barmaid's eye.

"Where'd you pick it up?" she whispered to me as I turned to follow Taffir to the street.

We made a voyage round the Horn to Frisco with general cargo and back with wheat. Though none of the other apprentices became really intimate with Taffir, they all liked him. Not infrequently they laughed at him behind his back, for he was an enigma to them, a curiosity. He was a curiosity to me, too. I had never met his like. But he was not an enigma to me, for he took to confiding in me freely.

When we met with bad weather—and we met with plenty—he never cursed as did the rest of us. No matter how violent the sea and wind, no matter how laborious our work, he never complained. The ship was a hard living ship. Ship biscuit, salt pork, pea soup, salt beef—the same thing over and over. Each week a tiny allowance of coarse sugar, a smear of margarine in cold weather or of canned marmalade in hot. Vinegar in plenty, and every day a swallow of limejuice as a scurvy preventive.

We damned the owners roundly, and cursed the skipper for a miser. But though he assured us that his last ship had fed a great deal better, though like the rest of us he was often half famished, he remained constantly stoical. But for one thing that stoicism of his might have irritated us. If a flying fish came aboard in the darkness of a squally night whichever of us was first upon the spot to snatch it ate a good breakfast.

If ever the cook gave one or other of us some scraps left over from the cabin table that one fed well at the next meal, and if he had anything left set it away for the meal following. But whenever flyish fish or cabin scraps fell to Taffir he shared what came his way. There was no greed in him, none of that wolfishness that hunger wakens in the average sea apprentice. He was altogether unselfish by nature.

In the second dog watch, when the rest of us spent our time playing cards in the half-deck if the weather were dismal or in dancing and skylarking on the deck if the weather were fine, he brought out navigation books and devoted his time to study. Those studious ways of his were a big jest with us.

"Why all the swotting?" one of us asked him one evening. "A couple of weeks at navigation school as soon as

your apprenticeship's over, and you can get all the navigation you need to pass for a second mate's ticket."

For a moment he regarded his questioner with thoughtful eyes.

"So that's the custom," he was evidently thinking. The custom was not thorough enough for him. He paid no heed. Evening by evening he continued his studies.

While we others each had the photograph of at least one girl hung above our bunks he had only the pictures of his parents and of his last ship. Night by night he wrote a few lines to his parents, making a long letter to be mailed when the ship came to port.

OFF CAPE HORN we experienced a long spell of tempestuous weather. A succession of terrific gales from the west tried ship and crew to the utmost. Day after day, night after night, the decks were awash with icy water. Day after day, night after night, we toiled upon the reeling spars till mates, apprentices and men were at the point of exhaustion. I recall one incident in particular that serves to show Taffir's character. We had been three weeks off the Horn when it occurred, and for many days no man or boy aboard had smiled or cracked a joke. All hands were utterly weary. It was beginning to seem that we were doomed to toss forever in the mountainous graybacks at the Antarctic's bitter edge.

During a black morning a lull came in the howling wind and the sky opened a little. Instantly the order came to put more sail upon the ship. We loosed her big storm foresail and sheeted it home. Cheered by the hope that now at last the luck was changing, all hands hauled eagerly upon the icy ropes. But the sail was barely set when clouds of Plutonic blackness whirled up from the westward and a furious squall whipped the white roller crests far into the screaming air. The skipper's voice rang out—

"Furl the foresail!"

Men looked at one another hopelessly. With their palms split open from long hauling on the ropes, with their bodies bruised from the long battering of the winter sea, with salt water boils on wrist and knee and ankle, the forlorn crew hauled the huge sail up once more. When it hung madly threshing in its gear the mate's order came—

"Aloft and furl it!"

Soaked to the very bone, men and apprentices whose every limb ached cowered to the wind's wild blast. No one made for the rigging. With no fight left in them, men and boys hung back, each waiting for some other to lead the way.

Suddenly Taffir appeared. He had been at the wheel for two hours. For two hours he had been standing exposed, without any shelter whatever, to the weather's extreme violence. On his way forward a boarding sea had carried him off his feet. He had been swept from one side of the deck to the other. His sou'wester was gone. He was bare headed to the blast. His face was white and wan. His red hair was plastered to his pallid brow. His teeth were chattering.

Unconscious of Taffir coming up behind him, the mate looked at the hesitant crew, waiting an instant ere repeating his order. Half desperate, he bided a moment, willing to give his crew a chance to prove their worth ere he must of necessity lash them to obedience with a scornful tongue. And still the hardiest of a far better than average crew hung back, no man willing to lead the way.

Taffir stepped by the mate. As he reached up and set his hands on the rigging a cloud of spray rose from the sea just beyond the rail and drove full in his face. For an instant he bowed his head. Lifting it, he glanced quickly back to us, as though to say, "Come on!" Next minute he was in the rigging, his icy hands upon the icy shrouds, the gale's full force tearing at him.

As one man, men and apprentices

sprang after Taffir, the youngest hand aboard. It was not the only occasion on which he led the crew in moments of peril. It stands out among others that I have forgotten, for of all wretched moments that we spent off the Horn that voyage, this was one of the most wretched. I recall it too because that morning I was close to him, closer than any one. I caught the completely fearless look in his pale blue eyes, the deliberate inborn leadership of his entirely modest gesture. For there was absolutely no pride in him, no showing off, no least air of playing to the gallery. His behavior was as matter-of-fact as though he were merely buttoning up his shirt.

During the three weeks that the ship was in Frisco, Taffir was away from the proximity of the wharves only a few times. Evening by evening, he visited other ships and for as long as daylight lasted wandered about them, studying their spars, their rigging; looking for things done differently from the way in which they were done in his own ship; making comparisons; talking with, asking questions of, any friendly mate whom he found aboard; listening for hours to the talk of the old sailors who had been picked to serve as night watchmen while their vessels were in port.

When dark fell he sometimes walked the few blocks between the wharf and the Seamen's Institute and spent the remainder of his evening there. Night by night when the rest of us went down to the ship after spending our time in taking in the sights of the city we found him asleep in his bunk.

Every day he mailed a letter home. We wrote few letters. In such letters as we did write we usually asked our people to send us money. His only money was the one dollar that the skipper gave to each apprentice on Saturday nights. We spent our dollar in an evening, buying a good meal with part of it and beer with what was left. He made his dollar last the week, unless, as not infrequently happened, one or other of us borrowed a part of it from him. The moment he was asked, he lent freely. Such loans were rarely returned. That made no difference to him. He was generosity itself.

He returned from his second voyage much as he had returned from his first, only that he was now become thoroughly hardened. He was tough as steel wire. After only some two and a half years at sea, he was already a fine young sailor. I visited his home with him. His mother's pride was great. She said to me—

"He's his father's son."

If his father felt any pride, he hid it. Pride was a devil's wile in his estimation. The schoolmaster, who but for his lame leg should have lived in Cromwell's time and have ridden in the ranks of the harsh Ironside Puritans, listened to his son's talk of the sea and watched him with sharp eyes. When I left the house he was warning his son against Satan. Chief of Satan's wiles was strong drink. I smiled as the door shut on me. I knew that for all his talk of pride, there was pride in the father. Already he saw in his son a future sea captain of England.

OUR NEXT voyage was to Frisco again. Taffir remained unchanged. When we returned to Liverpool his apprenticeship was over. On the way home he had stoically endured great pain from toothache. Week on week he had kept several hollow teeth filled with pitch taken from between the deck planks and worked up in his fingers till it was soft. Though his pain had often amounted to agony he never let up but, saying nothing about it to the mate who would have told him to stay below till he was feeling better, did his work with the rest of us; taking his tricks at the wheel and lookout when his turn came; going aloft to struggle with ballooning sails.

Often soaked through with icy water, never well fed, enduring torture, he more than once led the way into the rigging at desperate moments. One and all, we

had come to hold a deep respect for him. If we sometimes still spoke of him as Queer-fellow, a rummy duck, we never laughed at him behind his back now. We were smart young sailors. We well knew that he was a smarter. We were proud of our young manhood's strength. We knew that his strength was greater than our own.

More skilled than any of us, there was never the least particle of show-off in him. If ever he came to another's help where that other's skill failed, he did it so naturally, in so matter-of-fact a fashion, that when the work was done the one who had failed was in no way chagrined by his failure. He was as fine a comrade as any man upon the sea might wish.

I visited his home with him again. Again I saw the querulous fanatic and his Spartan son together. Again I listened while the schoolmaster warned my comrade of the wiles of Satan. I wondered if in that fanatic side of the man there was really any room for love for his son. But one thing was sure. In his son he saw himself as he might have been and gloried in the thought that some day his own flesh and blood might serve king and country. I felt that he would gladly sacrifice his son. The man's hardness repelled me.

But Taffir revered his sire. Reverence and affection went hand in hand. That affectionate nature that to his fellows at sea had so often shown itself in comradely ways of sharing whatever was his, in constant readiness to take more than full share of toil and of danger, was entirely blind to the eccentricities of his father. What repelled me, he was unaware of. And oddly, there seemed nothing incongruous in his devoted respect.

That simple fat woman, his mother, in whose nature was naught but a ready subservience, Taffir reverenced equally. But for that subservience, which he must in a measure have inherited from her, my comrade's fate might have been otherwise.

A week after we came in from sea Taffir took and passed his examination for second mate. Then, for a time, I lost touch with him.

I met him in Calcutta a year later. He was second mate of a fine bark. He told me that his mother had died. But he was still writing regularly to his father. And he was sending his father part of his small pay.

We met every evening for a week. He confided in me freely. It was during that week that I first became fully aware of the depths of his ambition to enter the navy, to serve his king and his country. Should a little good luck come his way there was no reason why he should not attain that ambition. He realized that as much as I realized it myself.

WHEN next I ran across him some year and a half later it was in Frisco. He was mate of a full rigger. Our ships came in and docked on the same tide. I met him that evening when I went ashore. He had not changed. When I suggested that we take a drink together he shook his head. We went to a restaurant. While I ordered the usual hearty meal of a sailor he contented himself with a couple of soft boiled eggs and the unfailing glass of milk. He spoke of his ambition.

He showed me a letter from his father, and took it for granted that I respected him just as he did himself. It was full of exhortation, "Keep your conscience clear. Do nothing to shame me." I seemed to sense the fanaticism of the schoolmaster increasing with the passing years.

There were many ships in Frisco that Fall. They were mostly British ships. But there were a few Frenchmen, and several from the Scandinavian countries. There was an Italian or two. And there was one German ship, a full rigger; one of the smartest appearing vessels in the harbor. I remember that she had a black hull and that her masts and yards

were painted white. She was one of those vessels upon which the eye of a sailor would linger. She was called the *Kaiserin.* Every day, from sunrise to sunset, she flew a great silk ensign at her lofty peak. With that flag flying daily there was a pompousness about her appearance; for with other merchant ships it was customary to fly the flag on Sundays only. And after the fashion of almost all vessels that flew the German flag there was a band aboard her. Regularly we heard music from her during the noon hour. Stirring German tunes. She lay some distance down the waterfront from my ship, so that I never came in contact with her people.

There was at that time a restaurant on Kearney Street that was a favorite rendezvous with the mates and apprentices of British ships. Many went there every evening for the good meal that could be had for a small sum. Taffir and I were never alone there. We always had company at our table. Mates of various British ships joined us each evening.

They came, drawn not alone by common sailorly comradeship, but by the presence of Taffir. For my old comrade, though only a little more than twenty-two years of age, was now mate of a very fine ship. She had made an excellent passage out to Frisco, the best of the year. It was common knowledge that her skipper was a hard man to get along with, and that, owing to that fact, she had often made poor passages because of bad blood between him and his officers. Men from other ships were curious to meet a mate who could get along with that captain. He was a martinet, an iron disciplinarian who, brooking no least divergence from his own set ways, gave no consideration to any subordinate.

Taffir had little to say of his skipper. When asked if he were not a hard man to get along with, Taffir shook his head.

"I haven't found him so," he said.

"That chum of yours must be a tough nut himself," a mate said to me one day. "He and his skipper must be two of a kind. I'd hate to be one of their crew."

"You're wrong," I answered. "I served my apprenticeship with Taffir. He's one of the most peaceable fellows on earth."

"What gets me," continued the mate with whom I was talking," is that that ship has a hardcase crew. Her skipper insists on holding services every Sunday in fine weather, and how in the devil do you suppose that he ever gets such a gang of hard nuts to attend?"

Taffir had not mentioned the matter of Sunday services to me. I understood at once how the crew of hardcases came to attend without making an uproar. Sunday is a precious day to the sailing ship sailor, a day for loafing in fine weather, every minute precious. Just as Taffir had often led his fellow apprentices in times of peril, I knew that with his quiet unobtrusive ways he had had no trouble in leading the rough foremast hands to bend to their skipper's whim.

"If you knew him as well as I do you'd get the hang of things," I said. "He's a born leader."

One evening a half dozen of us mates from British ships sat down to a meal together. Taffir was there, of course. Among the others was a jovial sort of fellow who until the previous day had been mate of his ship. For some reason that I do not recall her skipper had left her and he had been given command. He was a naval reservist. His ship was moored at the opposite side of the wharf at which the German vessel lay. At sunrise of his first day in command, riled by the flaunting flag of the German ship, he had hoisted the blue ensign, the flag of the British naval reserve. All day the flags of Germany and of the British naval reserve had flown close together. At noon that day I had noticed that the strains of the German ship's band had seemed more than usually blatant.

"You've gotten under the skin of the Dutchies with that ensign of yours," said one of our company to the newly made skipper

At that moment the door opened and the mate of the German ship entered, accompanied by half a dozen young cadets. As they moved to a table near us the newly made skipper laughed. Turning to the mate of the German ship, he called:

"Hello, Dutchie! How's your Kaiser and his wife and all the kids?"

The German mate regarded his questioner with a cold stare and sat down with his broad back to us. As our meal progressed I noticed that Taffir seemed to be listening to the talk of the Germans, of which I could understand nothing and of which I supposed that he was equally ignorant.

When the Germans had finished their meal their mate beckoned a waiter. The waiter hurried away, to return in a few moments with bottles and glasses.

Glass in hand, the mate of the German ship rose to his feet. He turned and, for an instant, regarded us with a scowling face. Then we heard his toast plainly.

"*Der Tag!*" said the mate of the German ship.

The Germans leaped to their feet. One and all, we turned to watch them drink their toast. In Taffir's eyes I saw a hard bright light.

As the Germans set down their glasses and moved from their table the newly made skipper beckoned a waiter. Next moment bottles of champagne, and glasses, were beside our plates.

At the toast of the newly made skipper we leaped to our feet.

"Gentlemen, the King!"

Taffir was on his feet with the rest of us. I caught his eye. He was directly across the table from me. Instantly I knew what was in his mind. The look in his face told me, plainly as words could have done. He was thinking of his father's abhorrence of liquor. He was questioning whether he should drink the toast. I nodded encouragingly to him. I leaned toward him.

"Go ahead!" I whispered.

Taffir lifted and drained his glass.

The door swung to upon the German sailors. Conversation rose again, mingled with laughter. The moment of solemnity was passed. The Germans were forgotten—forgotten by all but Taffir, who sat staring at the door through which they were just gone. He leaned across the table toward me.

"*Der Tag,*" he whispered. "The day! I wonder when the day will be!"

Those at table with us lit their pipes and dispersed. Taffir and I rose last. Turning to say something to him as we came to the door, I noticed an unusual brightness in his eyes, an unusual flush upon his face. Wondering what the schoolmaster would have said could he have seen his son, I smiled. The champagne had been excellent. And the champagne had gone slightly to the head of one who until that evening had never tasted wine of any sort. Taffir was the least bit unsteady on his feet. I took his arm and, for a little while, I held it.

We walked several blocks and came presently to where our ways parted.

"Good night, old man," said I, "we'll meet again some fine day."

A blast of cold wind came from the bay, bringing the damp Frisco fog with it. He straightened himself and wiped a hand across his brow.

"Good night," said he. "Yes, I'll come and see you for a minute or two before you go out." My ship was going to sea early next day.

At about seven o'clock next morning our tug boat came for us. Taffir had not appeared. Supposing that something had come up to keep him aboard his own vessel, I thought nothing of it. I was bound for Sydney, he for England. It mattered little. After the fashion of sailors we should meet again somewhere, in this port or in that.

OUR new crew, supplied as was usual in Frisco by a sailor's boarding house master, were a wretched lot—all more or less drunk, some scarcely fit to

be called sailors. I was in my cabin when the boarding master and his crimp brought them aboard shortly before the tug boat arrived. From my open port I watched boarding master and crimp help them across the deck and into the forecastle. Only one or two were able to walk unaided. Some had to be dragged to their quarters.

When I presently went forward to order the crew out, several remained in the forecastle. Knowing that they would soon sober up, I left them there. There were men enough without them to enable me to cast the moorings off and to take the towboat's line.

We had just let go the tug boat outside the Golden Gate when I became aware that one man was still in the forecastle, and went to order him out. Half covered by an old blanket, he lay in one of the lower bunks with his face to the bulkhead. His head seemed familiar to me. On the back of it I noticed a large bruise. I rolled him over. It was Taffir. He reeked of bad whisky.

Amazed, and wondering how my old comrade had come to be shanghaied, I left him there. While hoisting a topsail a few minutes later I overheard two of the crew talking. They spoke of how upon the previous night the boarding master, being one man short of a crew for the ship, had, in the darkness of a warehouse shadow, hit a man over the head with a lead pipe and then lugged him to his establishment across the street.

Having got Taffir into his place he had of course poured doped liquor down his throat to insure his remaining quiet until he was safely at sea.

I had just finished getting full sail on the ship when Taffir, with a hand to his brow, came staggering from the forecastle. He flushed to the roots of his hair when the crew, sobering from their last drunk, shouted gibes and taunts at him.

I had no opportunity to speak with him until after nightfall. Then, when he came to the poop and took the wheel, I approached him. He was misery and shame personified. He remembered walking along the wharf in the shadow of a warehouse close to his ship. He remembered that later some one had held a bottle to his lips and had forced liquor down his throat. Beyond that he knew nothing.

Though it was natural for him to feel miserable, there was no need for Taffir to have felt ashamed. But for me to try to impress upon him that he was not the first mate who had fallen victim to and had been shanghaied by the landsharks of the Frisco waterfront was utterly useless. He regarded his misfortune as having come upon him solely through his own fault. The glass of champagne was to blame. He was quite certain that had he not taken the glass of champagne he would not have been shanghaied.

I tried to argue with him. Again and again I assured him that he had been perfectly sober when I left him on the previous evening. It was in vain. Again and again I tried to impress upon him that had he been in the least bit drunk I should not have left him to walk down to his ship alone. It was in vain. He told me that his late skipper would certainly attribute his absence to liquor, and would look on him as a deserter. He looked upon himself as a deserter. In tones of sheer misery he told me that he would never again be able to face his father, to whom the news of his desertion and the cause of it would be sure to come. I argued for a long time. I might as well have saved my breath.

When I told him that I intended to explain his circumstances to my skipper he implored me to say nothing, to let my skipper suppose that he was merely a common foremast hand. Even though the ship had hitherto carried neither, I knew that my skipper, an easy going man with a fondness for the bottle, would have been willing to sign him on as boatswain or as third mate. As boatswain or third mate he would have lived aft, would have eaten at the

second table in the cabin, and would have been removed from the ruffianly companionship of the foremast men.

I was compelled to let him have his way. Living among vicious men such as he had never before had to associate with, his life was continual misery. He was of course far and away the best sailor in the forecastle. For that matter, he was the best sailor aboard. He already held a master's certificate. Always a smarter sailor than myself, he had passed the master's exam before I had been able to do so.

In his watch on deck I was able to pick him out for such work in the rigging as called for particular skill, and thereby to keep him to himself. But in his watch below, and through the long wakeful watches of the night when he was on duty, he was compelled to endure the low talk, to put up with the sarcasm and gibes of the men.

For some weeks he endured his circumstances without remonstrance. During those weeks I argued with him again and again; or rather I tried to argue. He remained obdurate. He scarcely answered me. I doubt if he often heard me. He was mute. The old light was gone from his eyes. The old confidence was gone from his bearing. Whatever work he did was done with beautiful precision, but done mechanically. So skilled a sailor was he that I think he could have spliced rope or wire with his eyes shut. With him at her wheel the ship never swerved from her course by a hair's breadth. But all sailor pride was dead in him. He was become a haggard automaton upon the rolling sea.

There came at last a bright sunny evening when, goaded beyond endurance by the villains of the forecastle, Taffir asserted himself. I was on the poop at the time. I saw the fight start. From the first his assailant, the burliest man in the crew, was helpless before him. I watched him thrash the fellow.

The skipper was below at the time. I prayed that he might stay below, for, though easy going in every other particular, he had one peculiarity in that he would never permit any fighting among his men.

At the moment that Taffir sent his antagonist to the deck with a final smashing blow, the skipper stepped from the chartroom. For a minute he glanced astern, to the ship's wake. Then, looking forward along the sunset lighted deck, he saw Taffir; erect, white faced, standing with clenched fists above his defeated adversary. He turned to me.

"Mister," said my skipper, "put that man in irons."

"He's the best man in the forecastle, sir," I demurred. "That big fellow is a trouble maker and useless waster."

"Mister, put that man in irons," repeated my skipper.

As I walked forward with the irons in my hand, Taffir turned and saw me. The big fellow had risen and stood among the rest of the crew. One and all, they regarded him with scowling faces.

"The skipper's orders, Taffir," said I, and held out the irons.

He stretched his wrists toward me. His eyes were listless. As I put the irons upon him the others laughed jeeringly. He did not hear them.

For five days my old comrade was kept in irons, locked in a room beneath the break of the poop.

On the evening of the fifth day the skipper came to the poop. Except for myself and the man at the wheel, from whom I was hidden by the charthouse, there was no one on deck.

The skipper had been drinking all day. All day I had seen nothing of him. His face was flushed. His eyes protruded like the eyes of a huge fish. In the room beneath the planks whereon he stood was one with whom, as a sailor, he was utterly unfit to compare. I felt a hot desire to knock him down.

"How long do you intend to keep Taffir locked up?" I sharply asked, for that one time omitting, and purposely omitting, to address him with a sir.

"What's that?" he asked in a hoarse, wheezy voice.

"Taffir, sir. The man you had me put in irons," I answered, gaining control of myself. "How long do you mean to keep him in irons?"

With a good breeze on her quarter, the ship was rolling considerably. Instead of replying to my question the skipper put a shaky hand to his head. A groan escaped him. As the ship took a heavy roll he fell to his knees. Seeing that he was unable to rise alone, I laid a hand on his arm to help him up. Even so, he tried to rise in vain. I dragged him to his feet, and into the chartroom where he collapsed on the settee.

"I want to release the man you had me put in irons, sir," I said.

A look of agony came to his bloated face.

"Help me below. I'm a sick man," he moaned.

Having conveyed him to his cabin, I called the steward.

"Look after the skipper, Steward," I ordered "Don't let him get hold of any more drink. He'll be killing himself."

Then I hurried to the deck and released Taffir. The men had come out to the deck. They regarded him sullenly. I blew my whistle and summoned them to the quarterdeck.

"The skipper's sick," I said when they stood before me. "I'm in charge of the ship. The first man that tries to start any more trouble will be put in irons. He'll stay in irons till the ship reaches Sydney. Get forward!"

The men walked sulkily forward.

"Taffir—" I began.

He paid no heed to me. He walked forward at the heels of the men.

During the first watch that night the wind hauled and came from the beam. It was just after four bells—ten o'clock. The sky became heavily overcast. Every star was hidden. Taffir had come to the wheel at four bells. When I had seen to the trimming of the sails I went to him.

"What do you think of the looks of the weather, Taffir?" I asked.

"It's going to blow very soon, sir," he answered.

"Taffir," said I, "when we're alone together for heaven's sake don't call me sir." Then I hurried to the main deck, called the watch out and ordered the topgallantsails taken in.

When the fore and mizzentopgallantsails were furled and while four men were aloft making fast the main a stiff squall caught the ship. I started back to the poop as, lying far over, with sprays lashing high above her weather rail, she raced through the hidden sea. At the moment that I set my foot upon the poop ladder a wild shriek rang from aloft. I heard a splash in the water alongside. Some one shouted—

"Man overboard!"

Even as that cry rang out a yet fiercer squall struck the ship. Water seethed in over her deep dipped rail. A heavy sea thundered across the deck. Every inch of her strained to the fury of the wind. Torrential rain beat down.

With a first rate crew I might perhaps have dared to bring the ship up into the wind, to put a boat out, to have tried to find the man who had fallen. As things were I was helpless. There was but one thing for me to do. I must get more sail off the ship before the wind came any harder.

Having taken in all sail but the topsails, I called the crew to the quarterdeck. One by one the able seamen answered to their names. I called that of an ordinary seaman. He was a German. In those days there were usually several Germans in the forecastles of British ships. There were even Germans with certificates that enabled them to sail as officers in British ships.

The ordinary seaman was gone.

TEN DAYS later I sighted the Australian coast. There had been no further trouble with the crew. They had left Taffir in peace. Continually ill and continually drinking to cure himself, the

skipper had barely been on deck. Though certain that liquor was responsible for his condition, though convinced that he was killing himself by its continual use, I was powerless to do anything.

The morning that we sighted land Taffir came to me.

"I want you to do something for me," he said.

"I'll do anything on earth for you, Taffir," I replied. But when I heard his request I at first refused to accede to it.

The name of the ordinary seaman who had been lost was Poheck. He had been at sea only two years. He was just Taffir's age, rather older than was usual for an ordinary seaman. Now my old comrade begged me in sending in a report of his death to the authorities to send it in under his name instead of under that of the lost man; to report that it was he who had been drowned, that he might change his name and take that of the ordinary seaman.

"Taffir," said I, "you're mad. There's no earthly sense in such a proceeding."

"There is sense," he replied. "My father will think me dead. I would far rather that he should think so than that he should think of me as having brought him shame."

"But Poheck was a German," I argued.

"It makes no difference," he answered. "If need arose I could easily pass for a German. I've picked up the language."

For a long time I refused to listen to his mad proposal. When at last he implored me, with moist eyes, I said:

"As soon as the ship gets to Liverpool I'll go to your home. I'll explain everything."

"You saw me drink wine. You know what happened. There can be no explaining that," he answered.

"There's no need to mention the wine," I retorted. "It had nothing to do with your being shanghaied."

He remained adamant. If I were to tell his father anything, I must tell him everything.

"I'd rather he thought me dead," he insisted.

I remembered the newly made skipper's toast. I wondered if it were possible that the fanatic could condemn his son for having taken part in that toast. I was sure that under ordinary circumstances he would not have done so.

Considering what had followed, I could not help but doubt. And yet the sole condition under which Taffir was willing that I should see his father was that I should tell him all. I felt cornered. I felt like telling him that his father was a fanatical fool and that he was another. But I could not risk losing the friendship of my old comrade.

At last I agreed to do as Taffir asked. But first I set before him just what such a thing must mean to his career. With the dead man's papers, papers that would credit him with only two years at sea, he would have to serve for two more years before he could even go up for a second mate's ticket again. It would be beginning his sea life over almost from the start, and beginning it not in the half-deck, but in the forecastle. Every argument was vain.

On the following day the ship docked in Sydney. Taffir left her at once, for of course I acceded to his request for a discharge. You may be sure that I gave him the best of discharges. Shortly after he went ashore the skipper was taken to hospital in delirium.

That afternoon a ship sailed for Liverpool. On her forecastle head, among her crew, I saw Taffir.

In three weeks I was at sea again, in command of the ship, with a new mate and a new crew all of whom were excellent sailors. I had wonderful luck from the start. Fair winds carried me to and far beyond the Horn. As I neared the end of the passage, the ship continually favored by strong leading winds, I made my plans with regard to Taffir. Knowing that my ship was a faster sailer than the vessel in which he had

left Sydney, I was quite sure that I should arrive in Liverpool before he did. I would go to Manchester, find his father and tell him the whole story. I was determined to win him over. On Taffir's arrival the schoolmaster would be at the dock to meet him. The whole thing would be cleared up.

As soon as the ship was moored and I had seen my owner I called my mate, told him that I was going ashore and should probably be gone till evening, and went to my cabin to write a few letters ere setting out for Manchester. I had just finished writing when there came a rap on my door.

Opening my cabin door, I found myself face to face with Taffir. In my eagerness I had quite forgotten to make any inquiry as to whether his ship had arrived.

"Come on!" said I, gripping his hand. "I'm going to Manchester with you at once. We'll settle this thing right away." A cold foreboding came over me as I looked into his face.

"I've been there," he replied.

I understood the stoniness of his expression then. I knew at once that he had bungled his story.

"Never mind," I continued. "You're going there again and I'm coming with you. I'm going to see this thing set right."

"It can never be set right," he answered.

"Taffir, you sometimes make me tired!" I cried. "Come on! Let's go, and the sooner the better."

His next words staggered me at first.

"My father died three days before I was shanghaied," he said.

Again I gripped his cold hand.

"Poor chap," I thought. "I suppose he's still being idiot enough to feel guilty toward his father."

Aloud I said:

"Then everything's all right! He never knew anything about it. Now we'll go to the authorities and explain the whole matter as much as needs be. You'll be cleared of any charge of desertion your old skipper may have placed against you. You'll take your own name again."

"No," said he.

I laughed. I knew what he was thinking. He was thinking that I should find myself in trouble for having made a false report of Poheck's death. Serious though that might have been for me in some circumstances, I knew that it was a matter that could be smoothed over. My reputation was excellent, and I had friends with influence.

Once more I had mistaken my man. He was not thinking of my part of it at all. He was determined to take his self-chosen punishment. He was letting himself be fettered by the memory of the fanatic.

With any one else I must have lost patience entirely. But to lose patience with Taffir was impossible. Too many old ties bound me to him. He bade me goodby and left me. I watched him walk slowly off along the dock.

Of one thing I felt sure. I knew that some day Taffir would win through. He was young yet. These things were all of them but incidents that should some day go to make his final triumph the greater. It was impossible, I thought, that a seaman such as he could be wasted.

FOR SOME months I heard nothing at all of him. I often wondered where he was, in what ship he was sailing, among what sort of men he was living his lonely days; to what extent he was regretting, with the passing of time, the course that he had taken. For that he would ultimately come to regret it I felt entirely sure.

Then one day I read of a vessel that had been dismasted and almost lost in a gale in the Western Ocean. Her skipper had been severely injured by a falling spar. Her mate had been killed. For a short time there had been confusion and terror on her decks. Then one of her crew had risen and made himself

leader, had taken charge of her, fitted her with a jury rig, and navigated her safely to port.

Poheck, of course! Taffir! The paper spoke of him as an ordinary seaman with but three years' experience! I smiled. But when I read that Poheck had been granted a mate's certificate in recognition of his skill I laughed. Granted a mate's certificate, Taffir, who had already owned a master's certificate when he went mate of the ship that later, in his own estimation, he had deserted.

I pictured that timorous crew bending to his will, accepting his calm leadership. The same old Taffir who in our apprentice days had often led the way in moments of peril.

As I read further my eyes opened wide in astonishment. Poheck had declined to accept a mate's certificate, saying that he would prefer to serve the usual time and to obtain one in the customary manner! The utterly, the hopelessly contradictory Taffir again! The same Taffir who in our apprentice days had labored so assiduously to prepare himself for a captaincy.

Fanatic! Remembering his childhood, I shook my head when that word came to me. I couldn't call him so. I could only recall the old days and call him Queer-fellow. Such an alien to the rest of us was he! But of one thing I was more than ever sure. Eventually he must rise above circumstance.

Something over a year had passed. I had heard nothing more of him. On a dark and threatening day I was steaming southward somewhere to the northwest of Cape Villano, at the extreme northwest corner of the Spanish coast. I had left sailing ships and was in command of a small passenger steamer running between London and the Canaries by way of Lisbon and the Moroccan coast.

Called to the bridge by my mate, I saw a large tramp steamer wallowing in the troughs. A glance was enough to tell me that she was broken down. There was no wind. Great smooth crested rollers swung sluggishly in from the Atlantic. On the tramp's stern I could just make out her name. The *Koenig* of Bremen. She was rolling horribly. Hoping that she would ask me to tow her in to Lisbon, and that I might pocket a nice lump of salvage money for myself and for my owners, I signaled to ask if she wanted assistance. To my disappointment her reply was—

"Please report me all well."

And disappointed though I was, that signal thrilled me. Whoever was in command of her must be either a daredevil or an uncommonly level headed seaman.

But when the tramp was far astern a breeze out of the southwest began to ruffle the dark Biscay swells. I saw scraps of sail, evidently made out of hatch tarpaulins, hoisted upon her two stumpy masts. Her rolling eased a little as the makeshift sails steadied her. In a little while I lost sight of her beneath a lowering horizon.

Before long the wind increased to half a gale.

"Whoever her skipper is, he's going to have a lively time of it making repairs in the blow that's coming," I thought.

It blew like fury all night, but eased away again soon after daybreak. On coming in to Lisbon I reported the *Koenig* all well. As to whether she really was all well I had very grave doubts.

By when I left Grand Canary for London no news had come of the *Koenig*. No other vessel had reported her. But owing to my report no anxiety was felt for her, though she was on the overdue list, of course.

On my homeward voyage I was again called up by my mate. I was somewhere to the westward of Ushant and, owing to continual thick weather, was keeping my ship considerably more to the westward, farther away from the land, than was usual.

On reaching my bridge I saw a steamer a short distance to the westward. A light breeze was coming out of the southwest. The steamer had two old

rags of brown sail aloft. That was natural enough. But what perplexed me was that both her anchors were down. Knowing that in the depth of the water beneath her they could not possibly touch bottom, I was puzzled to know what her skipper was doing. When I signaled to ask whether she wanted assistance her reply was the same as it had been before; for it was the *Koenig* again, of course. I made up my mind to find out something about her and, having steamed round her stern to a position to windward of her, lowered a boat and sent my mate off to board her. There was just time for him to get back before nightfall.

On returning, my mate reported that the tramp's engines had broken down the day before we first sighted her on our outward voyage. She was from the east with a very valuable cargo. On the morning of the day on which we had first seen her she had sighted an outward bound vessel belonging to the same company, and that vessel's mate, being ill, had sent off her mate to take his place. The *Koenig* had then held on her course for Bremen, with her skipper and second mate to take care of her. Some hours later she had broken down and shortly after breaking down had sighted an inbound Spanish steamer.

At that time there had seemed to be a chance that it might be possible to effect repairs and her skipper had refused to listen to the demands of his crew that he ask the Spaniard to tow him in. At his refusal the crew mutinied. They had overpowered him and were on the point of signaling the now distant Spaniard when the second mate ran up from the engineroom where he had been helping the engineers. He subdued the mutineers single handed and, his skipper having been severely injured by them, took command. He had been in command ever since. An hour or so before we first met him he had sent his skipper aboard a passing vessel bound in to Bordeaux.

Ever since sending his skipper away the *Koenig's* second mate had been daringly drifting his disabled ship toward the English Channel. When with the turn of the tide the currents began to set out to the south and west he let go his anchors, which, though they could not touch bottom, very materially assisted the two small sails to retard his backward drift. When with the next turn of the tide the currents began to set toward northeast again he hove his anchors up and, helped by the two sails, drifted slowly on toward the channel.

Thus he had skilfully taken his crippled ship across a great part of the Bay of Biscay, thereby saving his owners the immense sum that they would have been compelled to pay had he accepted assistance. Now he was waiting till he could either fall in with a vessel owned by his own company that could take him in tow, or till he could get far enough up-channel to accept the services of a tugboat without having to pay too great a sum for towage.

IT WAS almost dark when my mate returned. As I steamed close by the disabled vessel to take a good look at her, my crew lined the forecastle rail and gave her a ringing cheer. Garbed in oilskins the collar of which came well over his chin, wearing a sou'wester the wide brim of which completely hid the upper part of his face, her second mate waved a brief acknowledgment from his post upon her bridge.

Something about the man's gesture, its quiet certainty, its matter of factness, startled me. To my mind there came of a sudden a memory of Taffir.

Turning to my mate, I said—

"Did you get that fellow's name?"

"Yes, sir," he replied. "Poheck."

It was too dark for me to do any signaling to Taffir, as I should have liked to do. Wondering how such a dyed in the wool Britisher had come to be second mate of a German steamer, I put my ship on her course and left him.

During the middle watch that night my mate called me to the bridge again. There was very little wind, but the weather was rather hazy and at first I could see nothing. But as my mate pointed, now here, now there, I presently became aware of a long line of phantom shapes passing swiftly up-channel.

"It's the battle fleet maneuvering without any lights," I said.

Dawn was breaking when my mate once more called me up. The fleet was gone. Dungeness Lighthouse lay on our port beam.

"What do you make of that, sir?" asked my mate.

I didn't know what to make of it. Escorted by one of our destroyers, a large German liner was passing, with the British flag flying above her. While we were watching her our pilot came alongside.

"Pilot, what's the meaning of that?" I asked, pointing to the German liner.

"There'll be more than one German merchantman picked up and brought in today, Captain," he answered; and added, *"We're at war with Germany!"*

"That settles that chap with the *Koenig,* sir," said my mate. "Pretty tough luck after the way he's handled her! He'll have her taken away from him now and he'll be interned till the war's over."

I made no reply. I didn't want to discuss Taffir. But nothing could have pleased me better. Taffir's troubles were assuredly at an end now. Had he taken assistance when I first offered it to him, the *Koenig* would have got safely to port before war started. He had as good as handed her and her valuable cargo over to us. A fine prize. Now he would of course take his own name again. He was safe to get a command. Very probably he would get into the navy right away, for there seemed small likelihood that a seaman such as he would be passed over. There would be immediate need of sailors of his stamp. Circumstances had at last played into my old comrade's hands.

No need to speak of my own fortunes during the four years that followed. What with enemy mines, submarines and commerce raiders, we all had more than enough to think about in those days. A man lived from one minute to the next, with no time for thought of the past and mighty little time for thought of the future. Yet even in those mad days I often thought of Taffir, wondering where he was, in what capacity he was serving his king and his country.

When the armistice came I was on the *East Coast,* and very shortly after it was chartered to take German prisoners back to Germany.

While watching Germans who had been interned for anything from a few weeks up to four years file over my gangway, I suddenly remembered the *Koenig* and fell to wondering whether by some queer chance any of her crew would be among my passengers.

I had dismissed the *Koenig* from my mind when I saw, crossing my gangway, a form that seemed oddly familiar. A tall lean fellow who hung his head and seemed to be completely indifferent to all that was going on about him. At the moment that he passed beneath where I stood on my bridge a man behind him laid a hand on his shoulder and said something to him. Knowing no German, I could not understand what he said. But one word I caught; the name by which he addressed the gloomy fellow. The name was Poheck. A horrible foreboding swept over me.

I immediately summoned a quartermaster, told him to find a man named Poheck and to bring him to my cabin at once.

In a few minutes, the quartermaster was at my door with Taffir at his heels.

"My God, Taffir!" I cried. "What's the meaning of this, man?"

He looked at me dully from listless eyes. It was some time before I was able to get him to talk.

He told me that he had been ashore

in Singapore, without a ship, when the *Koenig*, about to leave for Germany, lost her second mate. Since there seemed no early chance for him to get a berth in a British vessel, he went aboard her and, passing himself off without difficulty as a German, asked for the second mate's berth. Since the day of her capture he had been interned with the rest of her crew.

I was utterly aghast. Scarcely able to believe him, I asked—

"But why on earth, when you were picked up by one of our ships, didn't you explain that you were a Britisher?"

"I tried to do so," he answered. "They wouldn't listen. They only jeered, or cursed me."

"Well, you're not going to Germany, anyway," said I. "I'll take you ashore right away. We'll have it all straightened out."

"I'd rather not," he replied.

"Taffir, you must be crazy!" I exclaimed.

"It can't be straightened out now. It's too late," he murmured.

"It can," I retorted. "Ships are scarce, of course. But half the ship owners in the country will be offering you a command."

He looked me wearily in the face. The old stubbornness seemed to have left him. But there was a new stubbornness in its place, a stubbornness in which was no least particle of hope or caring. I knew what he was thinking of. He was thinking of his fanatic father, of patriotic dreams in the hero decorated home of his boyhood, of the naval captaincy for which he had planned so eagerly in those far off young years.

"You'll get a good command, Taffir," I urged. And yet I knew that I spoke but halfheartedly. His name could never be among the names of England's naval captains now.

"I don't want a command," he murmured.

"Come along, old man. We'll just have time," I urged.

He drew his arm from my hand.

"My God, man!" I cried. "If you let them think you a German now when do you suppose that you can get back to England? We're not going to allow any Germans round for awhile!"

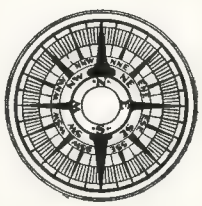
He remained obdurate.

I kept him in my cabin on the way over. Again and again I begged him to let me take him back with me. It was in vain.

He left me. Holding his hand for that last time, I asked him to write to me, to keep in touch with me. He said only thank you and goodby.

I watched him walk slowly away, the one entirely gloomy one among those others now returning to their native land—an alien, in a foreign country, as, for four years, every moment of which must have been to him as an eternity in hell, he had been an alien in his own country.

He did not once look back. I have never seen him since.



A Story of Morocco

HORSES

By GEORGE E. HOLT

AL-LATEEF the Clever One, chief of the Moorish sultan's secret service, lay on his mattress in a stall of the caravanserai at El Arache. It was midnight and the marketplace was asleep, as it should have been, and as Al-Lateef was, curled up in the brown homespun *djellab* of a hillman. Outside only the occasional sound of the beasts of burden — donkeys, mules, horses and a camel or two—restless in their slumbers in the *sok;* inside the long rows of arched booths, only the sound of snoring. Overhead the blue, quiet stars and a night wind carrying the faint, distant pulse of the Atlantic.

Through the dark silence a still darker figure, which a few minutes before had been a running shadow across the hills, came cautiously to the gateway and paused for a moment in its profound obscurity to take a handful of deep breaths and to peer about. Then it passed through the gate, paused, turned toward the north and slowly counted the archways of the booths on that side of the caravanserai.

"The seventh," the shadow's voice

muttered. "The seventh booth."

And then its bare feet angled noiselessly across the marketplace and brought it to a halt before the door of the seventh stall. There it straightened up and became a man clothed in the dark brown robe of a countryman, but a robe tucked up around his waist to leave his legs free in the manner of the *rakkas*—the long distance runner. A moment the man hesitated, then with his fingernails scratched faintly upon the door of the stall. No immediate answer came to his signal. Wherefore in a moment he scratched again, a little louder. Waited. And then he heard almost inaudible sounds of motion within the booth, followed by the slow, cautious whisper of a sliding bolt. The door opened a hand's breadth.

"El K'sar Kebir," whispered the *rakkas* through the opening.

"Enter," said an answering whisper from within. The door swung back, the runner was swallowed by the inner darkness and the door came back into place.

Al-Lateef, in the adjoining booth, twitched his shoulder in his sleep and awakened. That shoulder bore a recent bullet wound. He cursed it gently for disturbing his rest, rolled into a more comfortable position—and then abruptly was wide awake, listening.

Now the Clever One was not in El Arache for the pleasure of a visit to that town whose blue fortifications overlook the bluer Atlantic; he was not occupying a stall in the caravanserai because it was the most pleasant place to make a sojourn; nor did he occupy the sixth booth from the gate on the northern side of the marketplace by chance.

He was in El Arache on official business as chief of the secret service. He sojourned in the caravanserai because it is to the marketplaces of Morocco that all the winds blow all the gossip of the native world. He was in the sixth booth because he was interested in the man who occupied the seventh.

The business which had brought him to El Arache concerned the welfare of the empire. It was not highly unusual business, but it was nevertheless dangerous. Leaving foreign aggression out of the case, the chief danger to the sultan's throne was, as it had been since the time of Mulai Idris, founder of the Shareefian Empire, rebellion of this tribe or that tribe or a group of tribes, or uprisings instituted by those who wanted to profit by the disturbance. To profit in some way or other—to cause remission of tribal taxes, to oust some unpopular governor, to secure a fat office for oneself, or even, as happens every few years, to try to overthrow the sultan and gain his throne.

This chronic condition of affairs had kept the sultan's army in the field century after century. Government of the Moors was a question of rifles instead of statutes. And the worst part of it was that, however small the conspiracy or the uprising, it could not be ignored. It was like an insignificant injury to the human body, which, if left uncared for, might cause blood poisoning, gangrene, death. More than one sultan had lost his throne by failing to perceive that a small spark may cause a great explosion.

This, then, was the business that brought Al-Lateef to El Arache. To his keen and receptive ears had come rumors of one who made plans for rebellion. Even he knew approximately the district among the hills to the east of El Arache where this pot was stewing. But he was too wise to think that a sudden raid of the sultan's troops led by himself would net any fish. He knew that he must discover who was the head of the plot, who were this head's chief supporters. And also, that they must be captured by head instead of by hand. Thus he had come to El Arache, had listened to the whispers of the four winds, had used his sharp eyes to aid his brain.

Only that day he had removed from a stall on the south side to the one he now occupied. That move had been

made because he was interested in a brown fellow who occupied the adjoining stall. Not that he in any way connected this man with the rumors of brewing conspiracy. But to the chief of the sultan's secret service, any man who sits in the archway of his stall in the caravanserai of El Arache and in the course of a day has a dozen brown countrymen stop for a moment and exchange brief words with him and go their ways—that man is of interest. And so Al-Lateef had arranged with the master of the caravanserai for the change of booths, had sat this day within the shadow of his own archway and had listened to the best of his ears' ability. But all that he had learned was that his neighbor was a horse dealer, Hussain by name, and that these brown countrymen who came to speak to him had horses for sale.

"Five, sidi," one had said, "at the village of Ain Hamra." And "Nine," another had said, "at El K'sar. The horse dealer had penciled the memorandum of each report, so Al-Lateef had observed, and that was all. But somehow the business did not ring true to him; somehow the memory kept recurring to him of the fact that the smuggling of rifles into the country had become a well organized business. Somehow he had the idea that Hussain the horse dealer might not be buying horses, but selling guns.

Thus when his aching shoulder awakened him, and as he lay in the darkness wooing sleep again, he heard the scratching upon the door of the adjoining booth, he heard the cautious movements of the horse dealer, the sliding bolt, the whispers which followed. Noiselessly then he sat up and crept forward to the foot of his mattress. He unhooked from its nail in the wooden wall a gunny sack and let it fall. Then he put his ear against the spot thus uncovered. Had the room been lighted it would have appeared that there was a knothole in the wall, and if the partition had been looked at from Hussain's booth it would have been seen that this knothole was on that side concealed by a post. Thus one could not see through the hole, but it formed a perfect listening post.

Five minutes later Hussain the horse dealer was alone again and Al-Lateef once more was stretched upon his mattress. But not to sleep. He knew now that Hussain was not smuggling guns. He knew that Hussain was one of the conspirators against the sultan, and that he had been informed of a conference of the leaders of the conspiracy at midnight of the following day. Before sleep overtook him Al-Lateef had planned a plan. A plan which, if it succeeded, would confound this group of his master's enemies. Which, if it failed, would leave a dead body among the rocks in the hills. That body would be of the chief of the sultan's secret service . . .

A NEW day was born noisily. The first streaks of dawn in the east saw brown countrymen with their breakfast pots already over small fires in the caravanserai, and even these earliest of human risers had been preceded by their beasts of burden, which snorted or brayed or stamped or pulled at their picket chains, or blubbered like bubbles in a water pipe—those were the camels—each according to his morning impulse. These stirrings about and voices both of men and beasts, awakened likewise Hussain the horse dealer and Al-Lateef, his neighbor; awakened them to a day which was to rank as next to the most important in the short life of the horse coper, to bring to Al-Lateef a most paralyzing surprise, and to cause him to balance unsteadily upon that hairline which runs between life and death—a bridge no wider than that which the feet of the true believer must cross suspended over the flames of *el hotama,* to reach Paradise. The wings of death cast their shadow that African dawn upon two humans.

Al-Lateef heard his neighbor stirring about and very shortly opened the door

of his booth. Whereupon the chief of the secret service did likewise and saw his neighbor slippering across the marketplace.

"He," Al-Lateef told himself, "seeks breakfast. A good idea. I shall do the same."

He sniffed the odors of warm food in the still heavy air and followed in the footsteps of Hussain; footsteps which led him shortly to a little open-front shop run by a halfcaste Spanish woman, whence came clearly and yet more clearly as he approached the joyous odor of *svinges*—raised doughnuts—frying deep in olive oil; the fragrance of coffee strong as brandy, pungent and soul stirring. The *svinge* shop was not a dozen feet square, wherefore it was quite natural that Al-Lateef and his neighbor should find themselves squatting side by side, feet tucked under them, upon the questionable straw matting on the earthen floor; that they should grin at each other as they ordered large platters of *svinges* with honey, and big tumblers of thick black coffee. Youth is apt to crop out when the belly is about to be fed; men grin at each other over physical nourishment who otherwise would maintain stern faces, attending strictly to their own affairs. It is perhaps an admission of the brotherhood of hunger.

Wherefore Hussain the horse coper —who was no horse coper at all and who, less than any other man in the great marketplace of El Arache, desired casual contacts—and Al-Lateef the Clever One, who knew that he grinned into the brown face of a man to whom he must be Nemesis, turned their glances from each other's faces to the steaming platters of *svinges,* and each with a "Thanks be to Allah" seized a doughnut and dipped it into the convenient and common honey pot and thrust it dripping into a waiting mouth.

Now Al-Lateef was not the Al-Lateef who was known as Sidi Hassan Sanhajji at the court in Fez. There had been many Al-Lateefs during the past year—a twelve-month in which he was outlawed by the sultan, hunted throughout the land, a price upon his head. It had been impossible for him to seek a hiding place and lie there for the rest of his life; hence he had had to create new characters for himself; and so, but at constant risk of his brown head, go into places of danger and thus confound his enemies.

Through practise, his ability for disguise had grown until it was a marvelous thing. Not a month before he had actually sat, disguised as a black magician from Timbuktu, with the former chief of the secret service, Hajeeb, who was now head of the service in the south, without being recognized.

And now, although his skin was still dark from the stain which had made him the black magician from Timbuktu, he no longer wore the black sateen garments which betokened his dark profession. Instead, he wore the brown homespun *djellab* of the country folk and pretended to be a dealer in rugs. There were plenty of rugs, Rabatis in particular, which could be bought in El Arache; and as a matter of fact a dozen of them lay spread or folded in his booth in the caravanserai.

Carpet selling is an excellent dodge for one who wishes to see and hear and learn. For it is an interminable business, a matter of days sometimes, when buyer and seller sit upon the carpet under consideration and discuss every subject save that of carpets. Hussain, the pseudo horse coper, had taken the measure of his neighbor the preceding day. Now over the *svinges* and coffee he proceeded to remeasure the man, but found no reason to change his original figures. Al-Lateef talked carpets, and in due course Hussain talked horses, and one by one the *svinges* disappeared from the platters and inch by inch the coffee descended in the glasses until, with final polite belches of satisfaction, the two men rose, cast coins upon the matting beside their empty dishes, and side by side strode from the Spanish woman's

shop across the marketplace toward their domiciles.

But during this breakfast Al-Lateef had been working upon his plan, had been executing part of it. For he had taken occasion to study point by point the physiognomy and the hands, the voice and the features, the language and the thought of his neighbor. As they stood hesitating for a moment midway between their respective doorways, Al-Lateef offered Hussain a courteous invitation.

"As a horse coper, Sidi Hussain," he said, "you may be interested in a horse blanket I have within. A fine thing from Marraksh. Fit for a sultan to straddle. Not for sale," he hastened to add, as he saw Hussain frown and start to shake his head. "Not for sale. It may interest you merely as a fine piece of work."

This overcame Hussain's objections, apparently, and with a muttered, "I have certain business," he followed Al-Lateef into the latter's booth.

There were no windows in the booth. All the light came from the big door, which swung inward and which Al-Lateef was careful to leave no more than half open so that passers-by could see but little of the stall. But the reflection of the morning sunlight from the yellow dust of the marketplace lighted the room well.

Al-Lateef bent studiously for a moment over his pile of carpets, brought forth then a small rug not more than four feet square, of deep crimson with a single lightning streak of vivid green along one edge.

Between his two hands he held it before him, shook out its folds. Hussain stepped forward with a nod of approval, bent a little to pick up the lower edge of the rug, which came no lower than Al-Lateef's knees. As he did so Al-Lateef, with a lightning swift motion, threw the rug over the horse dealer's head, wrapped it around, and at the same moment bore the astonished Hussain to the floor.

THE horse coper fought and his big voice boomed inside the sack formed by the carpet, but the rug was thick and no outsider heard the sound. No man can fight well with his head in a bag. Hussain did as well as possible, but Al-Lateef had swiftly disarmed him of the knife which he carried in his belt, and then with the muzzle of his own heavy automatic pistol he had tapped his victim upon the head which jerked beneath the carpet. Whereat the struggles of the prisoner ceased, and Al-Lateef, with a smile of satisfaction, bound him hand and foot. Then quickly he closed and barred the door and lighted candles. That done, he removed the saddle blanket from Hussain's head, stuffed the fellow's mouth with a piece of turban cloth and then proceeded to search him thoroughly.

But although he found many things in the leather *shakarah*—a bag which takes the place of pockets, which are unknown to Moorish dress—he found nothing to interest or aid him. When he had finished his search he was just where he was before; he knew no more or less. But what he did know he thought would be sufficient. Hussain, the pseudo horse dealer, as he had learned from that midnight whispering, was one of that group of conspirators who planned the uprising against the throne, aided by a man whose name, either real or assumed, was Bo Ashara. And this fellow had been summoned to attend a meeting of the heads of the conspiracy at midnight of this day at a rendezvous in the hills east of El Arache.

His search finished, Al-Lateef worked more leisurely. He had time enough to do what was to be done. He took from a small wooden traveling box a still smaller box which he opened, revealing that it was a little make-up kit. Al-Lateef squatted down beside the prostrate Hussain, his kit beside him, and then, aided by a little mirror in the top of the box, he proceeded to make himself up point by point to resemble his cap-

tive. It was, he found, a very easy thing to do. Their faces were fundamentally the same: only the slight differences had to be accounted for—eyebrows a little darker, nose a little flatter, a line or two on either side of the lips, a shortening of the black beard and mustache: little things all of them, but they changed Al-Lateef into Hussain. One distinctive mark there was, a mark of which Al-Lateef had taken due notice when he had crammed the turban cloth into Hussain's mouth. One of the fellow's front teeth was missing. For a moment this puzzled Al-Lateef. But then he found the answer to his problem.

"It will be night," he said, "and mostly I can keep my mouth shut."

Wherefore he painted with a black and foul tasting varnish that tooth in his own upper jaw which was missing in Hussain's. The stuff dried quickly, although it did not seem so to the man who had to hold his lip away from the tooth until the varnish was hard.

When this was done at last, Al-Lateef surveyed himself in the mirror and was satisfied. He was still more satisfied when he stretched full length beside his captive, held the mirror so that both faces showed in it, and failed to perceive much difference between the two images which he saw. He rose then with an exclamation of approval, put away his make-up kit, made sure Hussain was harmless for some time to come and then went forth from his booth, closed the door after him, turned about and entered that of his neighbor.

Scarcely had he entered, however, when a brown countryman came to the doorway and peered in. Al-Lateef whirled, looked and stepped to the doorway.

"*Aiwa?*" he questioned. "What is it?"

"There are twenty horses at Akbel Hamra," said the fellow.

"Good," approved Al-Lateef. "That is all you have to report?"

"That is all, Sidi Hussain," replied the fellow and went upon his way.

"Twenty at Akbel Hamra," muttered Al-Lateef, reentering the booth. "Twenty horses. Hmph! Twenty men who can be counted upon to follow the leadership of the conspirators. That is the answer to that. And somewhere I should find Hussain's record."

Swiftly now and without further interruption he searched the booth. Thrust down into the toe of one of a pair of ancient slippers he found what he sought —the little book in which Hussain had recorded the number of "horses" which had been reported to him, and their location. It was, he knew, the thing to be done—to find this record—even though he could not perceive how it could benefit him particularly without knowing the names of the horses. However, after he had overcome the leaders of this conspiracy there would be time enough to try to gather in the smaller fry. And if there were twenty horses at Akbel Hamra, for example, it would be strange indeed if he could not lasso one of them and through that one gain the names of the nineteen others. His search revealed nothing further. This Hussain was a canny fellow, apparently. He carried no incriminating evidence about with him. Even the list which Al-Lateef now had in his *shakarah* was not incriminating. Not, at least, until a lot of work had been done.

Wherefore, satisfied now that Hussain's booth contained nothing more of interest, Al-Lateef came outside, locked the door and dropped the key into his *shakarah*. He returned then to his own booth, saw that Hussain was still unconscious, closed the door and, with an explanation ready on his tongue should any one be curious about his locking the door of another man's establishment, turned the key and dropped it beside its fellow in his bag. Then he made swift steps across the marketplace and through the city gate, and part way through the town itself, where he found a cobbler squatting in his little shop in the Street of the Leather Workers.

They greeted each other cautiously, and after ten words from Al-Lateef the

cobbler rose, put on his brown *djellab*, and he and Al-Lateef made their way quickly back to the marketplace and to Al-Lateef's booth. Inside the cobbler stared at the prostrate man upon the floor, a man now beginning to regain unpleasant consciousness. He shook his head.

"I do not know him," he said. "I have never seen him before, so far as I recall. Nevertheless, it shall be as you desire, my friend. Go about your business. I shall sit here until you return, and your prisoner will be safe." Hussain turned a malicious gaze upon him. "I shall," continued the cobbler, "if he thinks to make trouble, tap him upon the head with this," and he pulled from beneath his *djellab* a heavy little cobbler's hammer. "Thus," he added, grinning cheerfully, "I shall keep my hand in, even though I am away from my work bench."

Content now about this, Al-Lateef strode forth leaving his booth and his prisoner to the care of the cobbler, and a short time later, mounted upon Hussain's mule—the master of the stables had recognized him and had brought forth the mule at his command—he rode out of the eastern gate toward those distant hills, a good day's ride, where at midnight he had determined to attend the meeting of the conspirators in the personality of Hussain.

He was too wise not to realize that he was thrusting his head beneath a suspended sword. There might be passwords of which he knew nothing and could not learn. There might be signals, the ignorance of which would betray him. There were ninety-nine chances for failure against one for success—and each one of those ninety-nine chances meant swift and painful death. The brave man is he who acts with full knowledge of his danger, not the ignorant man who is too stupid to perceive it, although of the latter stuff popular heroes are sometimes made. But Al-Lateef knew and still he rode forward toward the purple hills on his Majesty's business.

ALL morning Al-Lateef jogged steadily eastward into the face of the sun, followed by his diminishing shadow. The straight blaze of midday found him moving forward through a nimbus of the yellow dust which surfaced a small desert, his shadow, shrunken now by the heat to almost nothing, trailing along beneath his sweating mule like a reluctant but faithful black dog. But the hills of Abdeslem were in sight, dancing grotesquely through the heat waves rising from the plain. A crumbling dry gully offered scant protection against the sun, but in it the rider drew rein and dismounted. There for an hour man and beast and shadow rested and were refreshed, so that when Al-Lateef, food and water in his stomach, again mounted and started toward the hills, he rode more erectly, his mule stepped with brisker pace, and even the shadow, strengthened too, now leaped and gamboled ahead of him like a black dog leading the way.

Sunset found him traversing a rocky defile, paved and hedged with the débris from the hills of Abdeslem. Again weariness had come to him and to his mount, and as for his shadow, that had tired of the game and had sought some secret kennel of its own. Wherefore another rest period, hidden from the trail by a tremendous boulder; then the evening prayer to Allah, food, and again the road, the last lap now, in the pale illumination of a young moon.

Al-Lateef knew whither he was going. This country was not entirely strange to him, though not familiar. Once or twice in his life he had traveled this same trail. He knew that by ten o'clock he would come to a fork in the road at the top of one of the high hills of Abdeslem, that the right hand turn would be the road to the village of Esh-Shuan. North of Esh-Shuan were the crumbling ruins of the tomb of a local and long forgotten *shareef*—the meetingplace-to-be of the conspirators.

Sure footed, his mule carried him

through the darkness of the rocky defiles, began and finished the steeper ascent. There the beast stopped for breath and Al-Lateef saw the road to Esh-Shuan slipping down the eastern side of the hill. Crags of rock surrounded him, among which the moonlight glimmered ghost-like—white sentinels on a hilltop vastly silent, vastly self-contained, as though the existence of such things as human beings and their multitudinous affairs was beneath their knowledge. Al-Lateef shrugged shoulders with some distaste for the spot. That road to Esh-Shuan—was it the road to death?

A sudden voice split the night like thunder in his ears.

"Who goes?" demanded the voice, as a dark figure, rifle in hand, stepped from behind a crag a dozen paces ahead.

Al-Lateef gripped himself. The time had come. The time when he must put his venture to the test. Cautiously he slipped his hand through the opening of his *djellab*, felt easier as it gripped the butt of his automatic pistol. He touched the mule with his heel and the beast shambled forward.

"It is I, Hussain," he said, and drew near the waiting guard. The man's rifle leaped upward, and Al-Lateef released his pistol from his belt.

"Your face, sidi. I would see your face," said the guard.

Al-Lateef stopped his mule scarce two yards from the guard, threw back the hood of his *djellab* and inclined his face to the moonlight. The muscles of his hand and arm were tense and the pistol was ready for instant use. But the guard, having taken one look at the face of the man he had stopped, lowered his rifle quickly, salaamed and stepped back.

"Pass, Sidi—Hussain, pass," he said, uttering the name with hesitation.

Al-Lateef took a deep breath. This danger at least was past.

"The others?" he questioned. "They have arrived?"

"Six, Sidi Hussain, have passed this way," replied the man. "That is all I know, sidi. I wait here to observe others who may wish to pass."

"It is well," replied Al-Lateef, and ambled off down the road to Esh-Shuan. There would be, he conceived, no more guards along this road—not at least until he reached the immediate vicinity of the conspirators' meetingplace, the tomb of the forgotten *shareef*. He rode now with a somewhat lighter heart; he had passed once as Hussain the horse coper; perhaps the eyes of a dozen or a score of men would be no keener than those of the guard on the Esh-Shuan road. He reflected that there had been no password, no signal, that the guard had known the face of Hussain, judged therefore that those who guarded the roads knew by face those who should pass and those who should not.

Reaching the bottom of the hill, Al-Lateef urged his mule to a swifter pace across a little valley toward another rise. Beyond that rise, he knew, there lay another valley and in it the tomb of the old *shareef*. Coming to this hill in due course, he stopped, dismounted and led his mule away from the road a distance of perhaps a hundred yards where he tethered it out of sight behind a boulder. There was yet, he judged, an hour to midnight. He had plenty of time. Wherefore he made his way cautiously and silently to the top of the hill, keeping well away from the trail, at the top of which he suspected there would be another guard. He gained the summit whence he could look down into the valley. Half a mile away he saw the ruins of the tomb faintly illuminated by the light from a camp-fire. From his *shakarah* he drew a pair of small but powerful field glasses, focused them upon the tomb. Then came to his vision a circle of dark figures grouped about the fire—a dozen of them—talking, laughing, smoking, beneath ancient olive trees which twisted their tortured limbs like Hindu holy men who distort themselves for the glory of their God.

Having seen what he could see, Al-

Lateef restored the glasses to his *shakarah* and made his way back to his mule. It was now, he judged, full midnight, or the stars were off their courses. He led his mule back to the road, mounted and made the ascent. As he had guessed would be the case, a second guard stopped him at the hilltop. But with more confidence now, Al-Lateef spoke before the man had a chance to make his challenge.

"It is I, Hussain," he said. "Am I late?" Instantly the guard stepped aside and bowed.

"I have kept count from here, sidi," he said. "All the others are awaiting your arrival."

Al-Lateef rode forward down the hillside, across the little valley, eyes upon that group of daring men who gathered thus at midnight to plot against their sovereign. For a moment he checked his mule's pace, then shrugged and let the beast continue its course.

"I am no Daniel," Al-Lateef told himself, "yet assuredly I go into a lion's den. Howsoever, if the mantle of Allah's protection is about me as it was about that other one, I shall take no harm. And if it is to be withdrawn from my shoulders—that is the will of Allah. Why question it?"

And so he rode forward the last hundred yards into a surprise that nearly caused him to tumble from his mule.

As one man they rose to greet him, to lift hands in welcome.

"He comes! He comes! He is here! Bo Ashara is here!"

BO ASHARA! Not Hussain, but Bo Ashara! They came forward to surround him, to greet him further. The yellow flame of the camp-fire seemed to jump from the earth and dance in derision before his eyes. The black figures silhouetted against it became a host of dark goblins moving oddly. The twisted limbs of the olive trees seemed to be reaching down to seize him.

Bo Ashara! Not Hussain, one of the conspirators only—but Bo Ashara, the leader! Al-Lateef was profoundly grateful for the few moments occupied in the greetings, moments during which he had only to return nods and grins and words of meaningless formality. Grateful—because in his head dangerous words were pounding.

"You are not merely Hussain, one of the conspirators: you are Bo Ashara, their leader. Twenty men will study your face, your words, your voice, your every motion. Twenty men will look to you for information, for guidance, for decision. Twenty men will know those things of which you are completely ignorant. And twenty men would gladly become twenty murderers if they should see through your disguise."

As physical danger possesses strange power for making the muscles act with abnormal quickness or abnormal strength, so does danger make the minds of intelligent men function with amazing speed and efficiency. Not for nothing had the title of "the Clever One" been bestowed upon Al-Lateef. And now that agility of mind leaped to his rescue.

"The fire," he said, rasping his voice in the manner of Hussain, the horse coper. "That is most unwise. Dangerous. Extinguish it."

At his words half a dozen men leaped toward the blaze, kicked it to pieces, smothered the glowing embers with handfuls of earth.

"A lantern," continued Al-Lateef. "A lantern will be enough. Is there one?"

"Yes, sidi," a voice called. "I have one here."

A match glowed, revealing a tin receptacle and in a moment the stub of candle within it was lighted.

"That is better," approved Al-Lateef, dismounting now. "Set it on the ground there by that tree. Sit you around it." He let them gather as he had commanded, a score of dark figures in a circle about the lantern. Then he went toward them, leading his mule. He had no intention of leaving his mount where it would be difficult to gain it if an emer-

gency should arise. From behind the *shareef's* tomb and the trees he heard the restless movement of other animals. Should he have to ride for his life he would be instantly followed, but once the rocky defiles could be reached he might have a chance.

As he led his mule up to the group he thought swiftly. All that he knew of this business was that here were twenty men, the leaders in a conspiracy against the sultan, of which he was the head. In his *shakarah* was the list of "horses" which Hussain had compiled. That was all he had to go on. He could not take the lead in discussion; not at least until he knew more than he yet knew. His fellow conspirators sat silent now, attentive to his motions, awaiting his words. Well—he would play such cards as he had and trust to Allah for the future of the game. He could guess that he himself—Hussain, that is—had called this conference, that the *rakkas* who had come whispering to the horse coper the previous night had come to tell him that all had been informed of the time and place of meeting. Wherefore:

"I am pleased," he said, "that you are here. Are all here? I had no chance to observe before the fire was extinguished."

"All are here, sidi," a man sitting beside the candle lantern, made answer, "save thy cousin Cassim. He lies ill at Arzila, alleging that some one has sought his death—and quite nearly accomplished it—by poison."

"So I, too, have heard," said Al-Lateef then, thinking to himself that if he did not even know he had a cousin, what he might pretend to know about him would make little difference. "Let us then proceed."

What the devil should he say next? Unquestionably Hussain had plans which he intended to divulge to these conspirators against the peace of the realm. But how find out what those plans might be without exposing his own ignorance? Suddenly a thought flashed to him. Instead of doing the talking himself, let the others do it. Good enough. The procedure leaped clear in his mind.

"I desire," he said, "that each of you in turn, before we make any further plans or confirm those already made, give his report on the situation as he has observed it, and to express his honest opinion concerning such plans as we have discussed in the past, and concerning our future actions." A sudden fear smote him: he knew the names of not one of these fellow conspirators. Emergency. "Begin next to the lantern and go around."

"I, sidi, you mean?" asked a bearded ruffian sitting beside the lantern, who cast a look then at his neighbor on the other side of the flame.

"Good enough," approved Al-Lateef. "Go ahead."

The man spoke at length. He was somewhat garrulous, touching upon many matters, and for this Al-Lateef was duly grateful.

"I, bin-Hamdush," said the fellow, and Al-Lateef made due note of the name, "have been constantly in saddle for a week. I have visited—" he named a dozen villages— "and I have talked with—" he named a score of men— "and I am satisfied that they will follow, with their followers, where you lead, sidi. Moreover, respecting the plan which you suggested, that we seize the town of El K'sar as a base of operations—" Al-Lateef gasped inwardly: the scratching of a finger nail upon the door of Hussain's booth had indeed been the signal for a startling affair!— "I am of the opinion that it is feasible, for these reasons—" and he proceeded to give them.

When he at last fell silent, a nodding of heads gave approval to his statement of the situation as he saw it, and Al-Lateef added to this approval with words of praise. Thereupon the next man took up the tale, but cut it much shorter. And so it went the rounds until when the last man had spoken Al-Lateef was in more complete possession of the facts

in this business than was the real Hussain, who was now a prisoner under the eye of an old cobbler in El Arache. And he was properly grateful for Allah's kindness thus far, although he could not modify the swift beating of his heart: danger—twenty deadly dangers—sat near him. And from any one of the twenty pairs of lips might at any moment fall a question which would bring disaster.

It was hard work this, sitting there with concealed hand upon pistol butt, listening, recording in memory what was heard, but always tense as a *gimbri* string against the unexpected, the unpredictable. But as the last man began to speak—and their talks had been becoming shorter and shorter, because the ground had already been covered by their predecessors—Al-Lateef thought he saw his way out. And so when they were finished:

"I have received," he said, "a score of favorable reports in El Arache. There are, for example—" he named from memory a dozen of the towns and villages written in Hussain's little book; gave, without trying to be accurate, the number of men in each village who might be counted upon as followers. And then, "we must defer the rising, we must defer the seizure of El K'sar for a few days. In El Arache I made discoveries of importance. The most important is that on the very day we had set to seize El K'sar, a strong body of the sultan's troops will be passing near that town on their way southward. We must let them pass before we act." Nods gave evidence of agreement. "Another thing—" he hesitated, then threw the dice. "Another thing, and this is good news: I have won over to our cause the basha of El Arache." He paused, heard the exclamations of surprise and approval and satisfaction.

"A bold fighter," exclaimed one man, "is that basha!"

And another—

"I am glad that Kaid Aissa has at last had enough of the sultan."

"Yes," said Al-Lateef. "Yes, he has had enough of the sultan. And he has many followers. Wherefore we shall make El Arache our secret headquarters—until we take El K'sar. It is better, I think, that we operate from El Arache, move from there upon El K'sar. The basha of El Arache—I have arranged it with him—will go with us with his troops. Thus we will seem to be the sultan's own forces—until we are safely inside the walls of El K'sar, and the town is under our control."

More nods and exclamations greeted this plan and, emboldened, Al-Lateef continued.

"Wherefore, these are my commands," he said. "I take the road at once for Esh-Shuan, where I have business. My command to you is that all of you come to El Arache, reaching it by midnight of tomorrow. Come directly to the basha's mansion. Do not bear arms visibly. Come in what guise you will. Give to the guards at the basha's gate the password, *'Maktoob'*. Within the mansion you will find me awaiting you." He rose and the others followed his motion. He swung into the saddle. "There is nothing further then?" he questioned.

"All is clear, sidi, all is clear," one spoke for them all. "Tomorrow at midnight in the mansion of Kaid Aissa of El Arache. We will be there."

AL-LATEEF turned his mule, bade his fellow conspirators farewell, and rode westward in pursuit of a swiftly fleeing young moon out of the lion's den—to prepare a den of his own.

But scarcely had he descended into the valley on the other side of the hill, having passed the guard where the Esh-Shuan road branched off, and now urged his mule through a rocky defile, when the mule gave a sudden leap sidewise as a figure jumped into the moonlight from a little cavern of darkness beside the path, brandished a knife in one hand and laid the other viciously upon Al-Lateef's robe. It was an old trick to

unseat a rider: to hold the horseman by the garments while the mount shied away from beneath him. Almost inevitably he must topple from his seat. And so in an instant, taken by this surprise, Al-Lateef felt himself falling, clutched first vainly at his saddle, then as his hands slipped from it, at the dark robe of his assailant. This served to pull the fellow down on top of him. Al-Lateef's head struck the ground with a thud which made his ears ring, and which broke up the midnight constellations in the heavens, scattering them like sparks from an engine.

But his eyes had been on that brandished knife from the first instant and, even as he and his combatant struck the ground, his hand was on the wrist which held the weapon. For a second they lay motionless, strength of arm equaling strength of arm—but not in silence. For to Al-Lateef's ears there came a vicious pant:

"So—so—cousin Bo Ashara, you would poison me, eh? To obtain all—of our uncle's property, eh? Poison my food, eh? For five hundred—dollars . . . And I suspect—my wife Fat'ma, eh? You—the bold conspirator against the sultan! Eh? Let us see!"

With a sudden surge of strength unexpected by Al-Lateef, the fellow who the pseudo Bo Ashara had no doubt was this same cousin mentioned a short time before at the *shareef's* tomb, jerked his knife hand free and with the same motion swept the weapon in a circle and plunged it at the throat of the man beneath him. Only the mantle of Allah's protection and a lucky guess as to the fellow's aim saved the feet of Al-Lateef from treading the bridge of the unknown . . .

But as it was his imminent danger, so it was his salvation, for the twelve-inch blade, missing his throat by no more than the difference between truth and falsehood, good and evil, struck a stone imbedded in the ground and snapped off at the hilt.

But before perception of this fact came to Al-Lateef, before he saw his "cousin" draw back his hand, glance at the useless knife hilt, cast it away from him with a curse, his assailant had leaped to his feet, tearing himself loose from Al-Lateef's grip, and was reaching beneath his cloak. For another weapon, Al-Lateef knew well. His own hand reached through the folds of his robe, seeking the butt of the pistol in his shoulder holster. He had no chance to rise. Life and death were racing each other neck and neck toward the wire. A gun appeared in the other's hand, and both weapons glimmered evilly in the moonlight; both spoke their golden words at the same moment, both bullets flashed on their deadly missions. But if the mantle of Allah's protection still enveloped the figure of the chief of the sultan's secret service, some fringe of it also warded off for a moment the end of all things for Bo Ashara's cousin. No doubt the gates of Paradise were not ready at the instant to be flung open for him. His bullet scratched the ribs of Al-Lateef, and the missile from Al-Lateef's pistol plowed through the leather bag suspended from Cassim's brown neck.

Swift as are the muscular movements of man in danger, swifter still are the mental actions. And although neither of the combatants, striving for each other's death there in the moonlight among the hills of Abdeslem, had taken more than a dozen breaths since Cassim had sprung from the well of darkness to wrench his supposed cousin from his saddle seat, Al-Lateef had thought many things.

He had had time to perceive that his assailant acted in good faith and apparently with good cause, to reflect that he himself was to blame for the attack because of his assumption of the personality of Bo Ashara, to see that the fellow appeared to have good reason for wishing to thrust twelve inches of steel into his cousin's vitals—and to form the desire to disable his opponent, to refrain from killing him if possible That was

the reason his own bullet had not finished the business. He had aimed for the shoulder, but he had drawn too fine a bead, so that Cassim's motion had caused his bullet to go astray.

He saw Cassim bring his two hands together to cock his weapon, reflected that it must be one of those ancient revolvers which are to be found so commonly among the hills. And then as Cassim raised his pistol for another shot, Al-Lateef took careful aim, judging the other man's progress in hundredths of seconds, and fired just as Cassim's brown finger tightened on the trigger of his weapon.

It was a lucky shot, even though planned. There was a snap of metal against metal. Cassim's revolver left his hands and leaped through the air like a silver fish breaking water in the moonlight, and its owner stood staring at his numbed right arm.

Instantly Al-Lateef was on his feet. He leaped forward, thrust the muzzle of his own weapon into the fellow's middle. Cassim, weaponless now and with a useless right arm, could only stand and stare malignantly at his supposed cousin. For a moment, thus. Then—

"Shoot, dog," said Cassim, "and finish this business."

But suddenly Al-Lateef laughed. He saw a way now of putting the finishing touch to the plan which thus far, leading him through deadly danger, had been successful.

"Listen, Cassim," he said, in his natural tones instead of those deeper, rasping ones which had remarked the voice of Bo Ashara, "does my voice sound like that of your cousin?" For a moment the fellow stared at him stupidly, failing to make sense of the question. Al-Lateef continued, "I shall make a revelation to you, Sidi Cassim. I am no more your cousin than you are mine."

"But—but—" stammered Cassim.

"But I appear to be, eh?" continued Al-Lateef. "Quite so, I do. But Bo Ashara, your cousin, is a prisoner in El Arache, whither I now go. And you with me—perhaps."

"But—but—who then— You are lying to me!"

"I lie not, Cassim," Al-Lateef told him. "You would ask who I am then? I shall tell you. I am he who is known as Al-Lateef, now chief of the sultan's secret service—and your cousin is my prisoner."

For a space the fellow stared at him with suspicion, disbelief written large on his ugly brown face. Then he said:

"Bo Ashara, my cousin, has a broad scar across the top of his head, a scar whereon no hair grows."

Instantly Al-Lateef drew back the hood of his *djellab,* lifted from his head his *chechia* with its turban, bent his head forward—but reminding Cassim to be cautious by a prod of the pistol into his waistband.

"Allah!" breathed Cassim then. "What you say is true. You are not Bo Ashara. Let me go then in search of him that I may kill him."

"I wonder," reflected Al-Lateef aloud, "if your desire to kill him is only a passing impulse. Perhaps tomorrow—"

"A passing impulse," growled Cassim. "A passing impulse! I have vowed by Allah to wrench that swine's life from his bosom. He is a double thief and a traitor—and until I have had vengeance upon him I call myself a dog of the marketplace."

This rang true. Therefore Al-Lateef spoke now what was in his mind. Sidi Cassim listened, in doubt at first, then with a growing satisfaction written upon his features. And when Al-Lateef had finished, his voice gave assent to the plan which the secret service chief had suggested.

"That," said Cassim, "will be vengeance indeed. After which—after which I may kill him?"

"That," said Al-Lateef, "lies between you and him—and Allah. You have my permission to try."

"It is agreed then, sidi," said Cassim. "It is agreed."

"Go then," Al-Lateef commanded, "and do not fail. Unless you desire to pass suddenly from this existence to another. *And* to be deprived of your revenge against Bo Ashara."

Bo Ashara's cousin grunted, took half a dozen steps and was lost to Al-Lateef's sight among the boulders. He himself remounted his mule, breathed a little prayer of gratitude to Allah that he was still alive, and continued his way toward El Arache.

MIDNIGHT of this day saw Al-Lateef, wrapped in the snowy white *k'sa* of officialdom, sitting on a silken cushion in the quarters which the basha of El Arache had alotted him in his own private mansion. On a little octagonal eight-inch-high table before him was spread a square of black velvet, and upon this sparkled a handful of cut stones of many colors—rubies and emeralds and sapphires; a rainbow diamond or two; sherry colored topazes and amethysts the color of the evening Moroccan hills. The brown fingers of Al-Lateef were arranging them into a design pleasing to his eye. This playing with jewels, this painting of pictures with glowing stones, was a relaxation of which he was very fond—one which his return to much power and some wealth had again made possible. It quieted his mind, absorbed his consciousness—and sometimes strange ideas emanated from some internal reservoir while he was thus occupied.

In one corner of the square of black velvet twelve stones were now lined up in a row like a file of soldiers. Al-Lateef's forefinger had just arranged a string of sapphires in the Arabic letter *alif*, when there was a knock upon the door of the room, followed by the entrance of a native wearing the basha's colors.

"Yes, Mustapha?" questioned Al-Lateef, looking up and recognizing the master of the basha's household.

"Four more, Excellency," said Mustapha, salaaming.

"Excellent," replied Al-Lateef. "That makes sixteen. Two more only to come. Inform me, Mustapha."

The master of the household salaamed again, withdrew. Al-Lateef added four stones to the line, continued fashioning his jewel picture. But he had scarcely arranged a dozen stones to his satisfaction when Mustapha returned, a broad smile wrinkling his face. Without speech he raised one hand, two fingers extended. Al-Lateef nodded.

"Excellent," he approved again. "All here now."

He swept the jewels into the palm of his hand, thence into a little chamois bag which he dropped into his *shakarah*. He rose, removed the white *k'sa*, drew over his head the brown homespun *djellab* which he had worn among the hills of Abdeslem the previous night. Bo Ashara again, not Al-Lateef, he followed the master of the household through long corridors until they came to a door before which Mustapha paused.

"Bring the guard," Al-Lateef commanded now, and Mustapha slipped swiftly away to return almost instantly with a file of soldiers, each carrying a pistol.

As they strode up, a white figure approached down the corridor from the other direction—the basha of El Arache. He grinned cheerfully at Al-Lateef and had his grin returned.

Al-Lateef opened the door and stepped into a large room where eighteen conspirators against the sultan's throne squatted around upon the floor, waiting for the arrival of their leader and his new ally, the basha of El Arache. They rose as the pseudo Bo Ashara entered; bowed to him—and bowed even more profoundly as the basha, in his robes of state, came in. But when six armed soldiers wearing the basha's colors entered—when they could see half a dozen more in the corridor outside the door standing at attention, they were puzzled. They were not left long in doubt, however. The pseudo Bo Ashara

spoke.

"For a consideration satisfactory to myself," he said brutally, "I have made an agreement with the basha of El Arache, who is a friend of the sultan, to bring an end to our plan. You are the basha's prisoners. I bid you farewell."

He looked from man to man for a moment, watching the sudden bewilderment, the more sudden perception, the rise of dark anger in the brown faces. And then, as angry hands started to reach beneath brown robes for weapons, as the basha's soldiers raised their pistols and called a warning, Al-Lateef turned his back upon them and strode from the room, followed by the basha. As they passed down the corridor, leaving the subdued hum of angry voices behind them, the remaining soldiers entered the room and went about their business.

Side by side the basha and Al-Lateef went to the basha's offices. They entered one of the rooms and there Al-Lateef divested himself of his brown *djellab,* donned again the white *k'sa* of ceremony, wrapped its folds well around his neck and chin, thus concealing half his face. Then with the basha he entered another room where Bo Ashara, the leader and instigator of the conspiracy, sat sullenly on a cushion with an armed guard beside him. Bo Ashara scowled blackly as the two men entered, but the guard leaped to his feet and pulled his prisoner erect. forced him to make salaam. For a moment Al-Lateef gazed into the eyes of the man whose personality he had borrowed for his undoing. Then:

"I have made a mistake, sidi," he said, turning to the basha. "I beg you to release this man. He is not the one I want."

"So be it," agreed the basha; and to the guard, "Take this man outside the gates. Let him go free."

Bo Ashara, having had in mind for many hours the image of death, was scarcely able to follow the guard from the room. But when he had reached the gates some of his strength had returned and he threw a vicious threat at the guard when he was at a safe distance. Then he disappeared into the night.

Within the palace the basha looked at Al-Lateef doubtfully.

"Now that the fellow has been set free," he said, "I begin to doubt the wisdom of such a course. Better, I think, to have let him face the rifles before a wall. And yet—" a smile crinkled his face— "Allah knows that my mind does not operate like yours. I am a man of action, of direct methods. The reformed conspirator is the conspirator whose head is safely on a hook over my gates. But perhaps you are right, perhaps you are right. That shall be as Allah wills."

"Yes," assented Al-Lateef, "it shall be as Allah wills, and I think that He will take full care of Bo Ashara—aided somewhat perhaps by Bo Ashara's cousin."

That the plan of justice conceived in the mind of Al-Lateef with respect to Bo Ashara ran in accordance with the will of Allah was proven with dispatch. Shortly there came to Al-Lateef brown men from the hills, who spoke the name of Bo Ashara with ridicule in their voices—and, in the case of one or two of them, a note of commiseration.

Thus the basha, noting these hillmen, spoke to Al-Lateef about the matter over their mutual dish of *kesk'soo.*

"How then," he said, "proceeds the matter of Bo Ashara?"

Al-Lateef stopped a handful of *kesk'soo* midway on its way to his mouth, smiled cheerfully at his friend and host.

"It is finished," he said. "Quite finished. And thus it came about: Bo Ashara, forsaking your hospitality, made haste to get in touch again with his fellow conspirators. But faster than he moved sped his cousin Cassim, for vengeance puts wings on one's slippers. 'Ho! Dost know what my cousin has done?' Cassim carried the question from village to village, a day ahead of his cousin Bo Ashara. And following

the question, Sidi Basha, swiftly he gave the answer. 'Bo Ashara has sold out to the basha of El Arache. His twenty friends now languish in El Arache prison, sold to the basha by my cousin Bo Ashara.' Thus the story was given forth, sidi; thus the word swept through the hills, through all of the Gharb, through all of that country which had stood ready to add 'horses' to the list of that dog, Bo Ashara. And a day behind Cassim came Bo Ashara."

Al-Lateef laughed, tossed a handful of *kesk'soo* into a compact ball in the palm of his hand and shot it into his mouth. The basha stared at him a moment, then repeated:

"And a day behind Cassim came Bo Ashara. *Y'Allah!* As a man stumbling from pit to pit."

"Even so," assented Al-Lateef. "Even so. The ground was sweetly prepared by Cassim. In surprise, then in dismay, then in bewilderment, Bo Ashara fled from village to village, seeking at first to find his friends, next to disprove this preposterous charge against him, then to save his miserable life. His name was anathema. He could find neither man, woman nor child to give him a sip of water or a dish of food. And at last—" again the brown hand of Al-Lateef projected three fingers into the huge bowl of *kesk'soo* and began that little tossing motion which forms it into a ball such as may be shot into one's mouth.

"And at last what happened?" the basha urged.

"At last," resumed Al-Lateef, "through the lure of his cousin, or perhaps one should say by the foreordaining of Allah, he came to the place where Cassim awaited him. He rode by night through a rocky defile near where the Esh-Shuan road branches away from the *shareef's* tomb. The very spot, Sidi Basha, where Cassim waited for me, knife in hand. A figure leaped from a well of darkness beside the path. Bo Ashara's horse shied, even as the apparition laid hand upon the rider's robe. Bo Ashara tumbled from his saddle. This time Cassim's knife did not miss."

SYMBOLS and PORTENTS

By JAMES W. BENNETT

THE Chinese, the most practical people in the world, take an impractical delight in symbols. The most commonplace of objects has an emblematic significance for them. Animals have special qualities. Fruits and herbs are endowed with magical properties. Even inanimate objects are venerated.

The tiger, for instance, is not only a ferocious beast, but a highly efficacious destroyer of demons. The god of wealth, Hsuen t'an P'u-sah, the most popular deity of this materialistic race, is usually represented riding on the back of a tiger. Since his money bags are many, such a dread and powerful beast is needed to guard these.

Then, too, images of tigers are painted

over the doorways of district courts as a protection against the evil forces that must inevitably flow into the buildings when passions are roused under the stress of litigation. Brain fever is believed to be cured by allowing the patient to lie on a tiger skin. Tiger hearts are highly prized for inspiring courage. Before battle, soldiers will buy tiny doses of dried tiger heart to swallow in rice wine.

The crane is a less fearsome omen to the Chinese, but it is equally gifted with magic. It is believed that the gods travel upon the back of the crane. The bird is a symbol of longevity and immortality. In Chinese funerals, the image of a crane is frequently borne just behind the catafalque. This, in the hope that the bird will carry the departed soul safely to the next world.

The rooster holds a high place in the Chinese estimation, since this bird is believed to offer protection against fire. It is not the actual fowl which is efficacious but a red image of a cock which is painted on the outer house gate to frighten away the dreaded fire demons. Incense sticks are thrust before it, and occasional offerings of grain, to insure its fidelity and constant watchfulness.

The cat, as an object of veneration, has a more credible rationale than the crane or the cock. China is a silk producing country, and mice can work havoc among silkworms. Therefore, the feline enemy of rodents, in effigy or in poster form, is placed prominently in the sheds where the silkworms are fed on mulberry leaves.

The fish has become the symbol of wealth, and solely because of a pun. Although written differently, the spoken Chinese monosyllable, *yu*, a fish, has the identical sound as the word for wealth, *yu*. For the same reason, the bat is featured in embroideries, in carvings and painted scrolls. Far from being the object of loathing that it is held in the Occident, in China the bat has become emblematic of happiness, the word for happiness being given the same pronunciation as that for bat.

Again, the pomegranate is symbolic of fertility—since *tze*, which means seed or kernel, sounds much like the Chinese word for progeny. The large number of seeds in a pomegranate gives force to the simile. The crimson fruit is often offered to a man at the time of his marriage as implying the wish that he may have many offspring.

It is by such shifts as these that the Chinese strive to give to abstract ideas a concrete representation.

In the peach we find the fruit which is most venerated by the Chinese. As a subduer of evil influences it is unparalleled. Of almost equal potency is the bark of the peach tree, the sap, even the sawdust. The seals used by the priests of Taoism—the faith of the common people—are made of peachwood blocks. When these seals are used to stamp the charms sold by the priests, the efficacy of the bit of paper is thought to be greatly enhanced. Temple gongs are fashioned of peachwood, so that when their hollow booming strikes the air, all demons may take warning and vanish.

The peach is China's supreme emblem of immortality. China's most beloved goddess, the Princess of the Rainbow Clouds, dwells on high in an Orchard of Trained Peach Trees. There she stands eternally, smiling gently, and welcoming the rare mortals who have deserved eternal life. She offers them the fruit of the peach which makes them one with the gods.

A *Two-Part Story of the*

CHAPTER I

TOLL OF THE JUNGLE

THE lost man was screaming at the jungle.

"Get back! Back, you devils! Back, you green man-eaters! Back—I'll shoot—I'll— *Aaaaahh!*"

His final shriek rang crazily along the natural tunnel beside him; a tunnel floored by smooth green water, walled by towering forest, roofed by dense foliage almost impervious to sunlight. His sunken eyes glared at the somber shades surrounding him. His trembling right hand gripped a rusty revolver which wobbled uncontrollably, then drooped and sank; a revolver in which were six shells, blackened, empty.

The shadows, empty as his gun, gave no response. The soaring trees, corded and coiled by huge vines ignored him. Inhuman, inexorable, the vast Amazonian wilderness gave no more notice to its latest victim than to the bones of many another wanderer whom it had wrecked and destroyed.

Exhausted by his frenzied effort, he slumped again in his covert; a space between tall buttress roots of an immense *massaranduba*, which, walling him on three sides, left him vulnerable only from the front and overhead. The glare died out of his glassy eyes, which clouded and grew dull. Suddenly an ague seized him; and for long minutes he quivered and quaked, faintly moaning. When the spasm passed he lay supine, seemingly lifeless. Then as recurrent fever fired his lax nerves, light dawned anew under his dark brows; a flickering light of madness. His lips, bristled by beard several days old, babbled disjointed sentences.

"Green hell. Green hell of Amazon. Million miles, million years, million dev-

Amazon Jungle

The FATE *of* ANTON LEBARON

By ARTHUR O. FRIEL

ils! . . . It eats! Ate LeBaron, it did. Ate me. We're dead. Dead and in hell, green hell— But where in hell's LeBaron? Meet him in hell somewhere. Got to. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Meet him in hell—ah-ha-ha-ho-ho-ho! That's good! Ha-ha-ha . . ."

His voice rambled on, rising to loud tones, sinking to mumbles. All at once it stopped as if throttled. His jaw dropped, his eyes bulged. Dumb, he stared at apparitions which had risen from the steep shored creek.

Silent as ghosts they stood grouped at the edge, watching him. Twelve in number, all but one were tall, brown, powerful savages, nude save for broad bark belts and clouts. Heavy jawed, hard mouthed, wide nosed, narrow eyed, holding long bows or spears, they poised mercilessly ready to kill.

The twelfth man, heading them, was short, wide shouldered, strong muscled and black. Bare as his followers, loosely grasping a brazilwood javelin, he regarded the lost wanderer even more coldly than did his men.

Abruptly the huddled shape beneath the *massaranduba* started up, teeth gleaming, revolver shaking in his right fist.

"Got you!" he yelled. "Got you now, you green devils! You won't eat me! I'll—"

His gun rose to aim at the black man. Its hammer clicked down on an empty shell.

Before that click sounded the black was elsewhere. A swift sidestep carried him a yard away from the line of fire. As he moved he snapped a monosyllable at the brown stalwarts, who stayed ready weapons. As he paused on new footing he reversed his javelin

and threw it, butt foremost. With a sharp smack the missile knocked the revolver from the feeble clutch of its owner.

The fever crazed man stared at his numbed hand. Then he reeled forward, still grinning.

"Got you, black boy!" he maundered "Stand still and I'll strangle—"

He tripped, fell, lay on his face, senseless.

The negro strode to him, grasped a shoulder, flopped him over on his back. Expressionless, he scrutinized the emaciated visage, observing the hollow cheeks, the black stubble, the countless bites of mosquitoes and *piums* on the lightly tanned skin. Presently he slid a hand through the torn khaki shirt and felt the heart. As he slowly withdrew it he muttered:

"*Máo.* Bad."

His gaze traveled down the khaki breeches, deeply soiled by much contact with damp earth, and rested on the high laced boots. His hands felt the soft leg leather, lifted one sole, rubbed it, dropped it. That sole was but little worn; the boots, despite scratches and stains, were almost new. The keen brown eyes lifted to the shaggy reddish bark of the huge *massaranduba,* scanned it, dropped again. A cynical smile twisted the black lips. The sick, starved stranger was evidently a newcomer to the Brazilian forests. He had been lying foodless at the base of a tree which, if cut into, would have yielded him refreshment. The *massaranduba* is the "cow tree", holding in its bark a palatable, though not very nutritious, substitute for milk.

The Indians, following their leader's glance, grinned dourly in comprehension; then eyed the senseless outsider with mingled contempt and curiosity. One of them stepped aside, retrieved the fallen revolver, handed it to the squatting black. Snapping out its cylinder, he glanced at the empty shells. Then he rubbed the rusty barrel, learning that the rust was light and new.

"Uh-huh," he murmured.

Rising, he spoke short aboriginal words. His men scattered, inspecting the ground and the near network of vines. Three faded away into the obscure tangle. Soon one of these returned.

"Trail five days old," he reported.

The black made no reply. He and the others waited. Some time passed, while the unconscious man lay unattended and virtually disregarded. At length the absent pair returned, bringing a felt hat, a half emptied cartridge belt with sheathed *machete,* and a waterproof knapsack.

GUTTURALLY they explained that the white man's trail meandered crazily about in the forest and that they had found these discarded articles at intervals along it. The negro nodded, glanced at hat and belt, and dumped the small but heavy pack. Out tumbled a miscellany of personal articles: shaving kit, compact camera, film rolls, electric torch, airtight tin of tobacco, rubber wrapped matches, spare socks, and other such things, including a leather bound notebook.

Each of these in turn the black man handled and replaced in the bag. Last he opened the book. The Indians watched him absorbedly, but read no more in his unchanging countenance than he saw in the opened pages. All those sheets were blank.

The only lettering visible was on the inside front cover where, in bold print, was the address:

Wallace B. Sparhawk
Care American Consulate
Manáos

At this the barbaric negro looked stolidly a moment. If unable to read, he gave the Indians no hint of such deficiency. Riffling the pages, finding no marks, he came to the rear cover. In this was a deep pocket. Exploring it, he drew forth a sheet of printed paper,

evidently cut from some book or magazine.

Laying the fragment on one ebony knee, he bent and gazed at it for minutes. It read:

> The fate of Anton LeBaron, who lived a considerable time in the unexplored upper reaches of that little known affluent of the Amazon, remains shrouded in mystery. He is known to have traveled widely among the savage tribes about its headwaters, to have taken a woman of the Huitainas as a wife, and in general to have largely adopted the aboriginal form of life in order to facilitate his researches. Since his complete disappearance no trace of him or of the book he was known to be compiling has ever been found. Indians interrogated by traders and others disclaim all knowledge of him. In view of the well known treachery of the tribes along this Rio Ricapuyo the most generally accepted theory is that he was murdered by some personal enemy or destroyed by the Surucairis or the Kukapotins who are known to be cannibals. However, strange tales are sometimes told at rubber camps far down this river.
>
> Whatever the end of LeBaron may have been, science suffers a double loss through the annihilation of his records. If they could but have been brought forth much light might be shed on this most obscure corner of what is now, much more truly than Africa, the darkest continent.

The squatty commander stared at these crowded symbols until the brown observers became restless. Then he restored the clipping to its pocket and the book to the pack. Rising, he announced with an air of wisdom—

"This man is not a hunter of rubber."

The hard mouths grew a shade less cruel. But the hard eyes showed no glint of friendliness for the unfortunate white man. Instead they looked significantly at that white man's gun, belt, pack, hat, boots, then at the creek, intimating that if their leader wanted those things he had best take them and go. Surveying them, the black again smiled his faint, crooked smile.

"He goes with us," he asserted.

Indian lips and lids narrowed. The tallest savage, after sourly eyeing the skinny wreck, grunted in grumbling tones as if asking why so worthless a bunch of bones need be preserved.

"We may find use for him," suggested the negro.

Slow glints came into the watching eyes. Without further demur a couple of men lifted the limp shape and bore it to the waterside. There they laid it in a dugout canoe; a canoe which, while the lost man defied phantasmal devils, had glided unheard down the smooth *igarapé*. In that long shell were hammocks, baskets of farina, a fish spear, and similar essentials of travel. With their new burden stowed amidships they took places for paddling. The black squatted comfortably at the feet of the white derelict, once more contemplating his gaunt face.

Sunken though that face now was, ghastly yellow-white under its tan, blackened by beard and by myriad tiny spots from sandfly bites, it was not repellent to a reader of character. The nose was straight and not too sharp; the mouth wide, slightly upcurved, potentially good humored; the chin tenacious but not pugnacious; the ears large and well rounded, indicating no meanness, mental or moral; the brows, a bit crooked, whimsical and somewhat reckless. For several minutes after the boat shoved away from shore the negro studied that unguarded countenance, reading in it whatever he might find. Then, somewhat roughly, he brushed from it scores of bloodsucking *piums* and laid over it the stained felt hat.

To the flies attacking his own hide he paid no attention.

His gaze turned to the pack which, with the other belongings of the wanderer, he had brought aboard. Presently he pulled from it the camera; found the spring button, snapped open the door, and contemplated the lens—large, expensive, fast in dim forest light. After fixedly regarding it he scowled as if facing an enemy. With a jerk of the hand he flung it overboard. It splashed, sank, was gone forever.

Indian eyes darted toward the splash,

then to him. Wooden faced, he drew from under his wide body belt a small pouch, shook out a mixture of brown leaves, palmed them into his mouth, stolidly chewed. The brown men, again unconcerned, fixed their attention once more ahead. Stroking softly but strongly they slid their craft swiftly onward through the shifting lights and shadows of the narrow *igarapé*.

The gaze of the negro rested once more on the insensible invader who had defied the green hell and all its devils to eat him. And in the black lidded eyes now was a gleam of mockery.

CHAPTER II

THE AWAKENING

SENSE and sanity returned to Sparhawk at sunrise of a new day. Light darted from somewhere, and he found himself peering at a black shape moving through a small rectangle of brightness. The rectangle vanished as a door shut. In ensuing dimness the black form advanced to his side and looked down at him.

For a moment the sick man stared at the dusky barbarian, who stood motionless. Then, with a slight headshake, he dragged a weak hand over his eyes to obliterate what seemed one more specter born of fever. Across the inky countenance above him flitted a brief grin. Full voiced, the intruder spoke.

"Bon' dia', senhor! Como vae?"

The wasted white hand fell away. Sparhawk stared anew at the speaker, then at his surroundings. He was in a hammock, inside a small hut, tent shaped, with slant sidewalls meeting the ground. The only light and air entered through tiny ventilation holes at each peak.

"Não sabe fallar portuguesa?" queried the negro. "Can't you speak Portuguese?"

"*Si*, I speak it," Sparhawk said weakly.

"Bom!" approved the other. "How do you feel?"

"A little tired."

The dusky head nodded. A black hand moved to rest on the pallid forehead, then withdrew.

"Naturál. But you are yourself again, uh? The fever has left you. Soon you will be on your feet."

"Uh-huh. What place is this?"

"A good place," evaded the native.

"Hungry?"

"Si."

"Good. I go and return. Rest."

Noiseless as a shadow, the black swung to the door. The white closed his eyes to avoid the shock of sudden light, reopened them when the barrier bumped shut, stared languidly around again, then sank into a doze. The short, simple conversation had wearied him.

After a time he roused to find the visitor again beside him, holding a gourd of savory broth. Eagerly he sucked down the nourishment; then, drawing a long breath of contentment, lay looking deliberately at the donor. After a moment his lids narrowed with curiosity. The negro's countenance, although coal-black, was not negroid in features. The forehead was higher, the brown eyes more intelligent, the nose longer, the lips thinner, the chin narrower than those of any negro he had ever seen. The thick black hair, too, was devoid of kink or curl. Judged by that hair, the fellow was Indian; by his features, Caucasian; by his color, indubitably African.

"Who are you?" abruptly asked the white.

"Homem dos Remédios," came the short answer. "And you?"

The questioner withheld reply a moment, turning over in his mind the Portuguese name. It meant Man of Remedies. Odd names were numerous in this Amazonian country. But this one, borne by a virtually naked bushman, seemed especially strange.

"Your name, senhor?" demanded the other, his tone sharpening.

"Er—Sparhawk. Wallace Sparhawk."

"Your country?"

"North America."

"And your business?"

"I am looking for Anton LeBaron."

With that announcement Sparhawk eyed the inquisitor keenly. The black lids seemed to tighten, but the inflexible gaze did not change.

"Who is he?" coolly asked Remédios.

"Don't you know?"

"*Não.*"

The denial was indifferent. After a momentary pause Remédios added—

"Who wants him, and for what?"

"Oh, he's not a criminal. An explorer."

"Ah. There is no reward for him, then?"

"No."

Sparhawk turned his gaze up to the ridgepole, thinking again. Soon his lids drooped, and he yawned. Remédios turned away.

"Sleep," he bade. And, carrying the empty gourd, he left the house.

The convalescent obeyed. Near noon he awoke, feeling stronger, and found the black again serving food. This time the meal was a stew, rich in nutriment, with an odd tang of something else than the visible meat and vegetables. He devoured it all without question. When it was down he lay experiencing a strange exhilaration of spirit, coupled with a restfulness of body, which combined in delightful lassitude. He smiled up at Remédios, who, wordless, slowly chewed a cud of something in one cheek. Before he could voice thanks or questions, however, the black fellow, still mute, walked resolutely out.

Sparhawk watched his departure with a half frown, but without comment. When the door had closed he puzzled over the riddle of the black skin, Indian hair, European features, and authoritative manner. Here in Brazil, he had learned, were many mixtures of blood: the mulatto, half white, half negro; the *mameluco,* half white, half Indian; the *cafuzo,* born of Indian and negro; the *curiboco,* offspring of *cafuzo* and Indian; the *xibaro,* created by *cafuzo* and negro; and many more complicated variations from usual types. From such intermingled ancestry might be born almost any sort of human creature. Presently the thinker nodded.

"A throwback," he muttered. "A nigger throwback, with white man face and some white brain. And a bush doctor. Homem dos Remédios, eh? Well named, after all. Maybe it's not the name his parents gave him, but who cares? He sure knows his stuff, and whatever he slipped into that stew is doing me a lot of good. Yes, Homem, old sock, you're all right. But where have I seen you before?"

Hazily he groped among foggy half-memories, soon to desist. The group on the creek bank, under the *massaranduba,* was inextricably mixed with feverish unrealities. His next thought was—

"Where am I, anyway?"

He half arose, eyes on the door. But that barrier suddenly started speeding around him, and everything else whirled with it. Mouth tight, he sank back. And throughout the afternoon he remained quiet, most of the time in a drowse.

ABOUT sundown Remédios reappeared for the last time that day. As at noon he brought stew, thicker than before, and differently flavored. Again the patient emptied the gourd without talk, meaning to ask several questions afterward. But hardly had the last mouthful gone down his throat when a veil of lethargy enwrapped his brain, thickening into a deep, dark blanket of complete coma. Utterly lax, he snored.

The man of remedies chuckled shortly, then grew grave. For some time he looked soberly down at the white face, then stared at a wall, gaze absent. Suddenly he voiced a harsh grunt, wheeled, strode out, shut the thick door with a hard thud. The invalid, undisturbed,

slept peacefully on.

Sunlight shone again in Sparhawk's face when he awoke. As the door closed he sat up, stretching, feeling no recurrence of dizziness, smiling at the approaching bush doctor.

"*Bon' dia', amigo!*" he greeted. "*Como vae?*"

The cheery salutation brought no responsive good humor from Remédios. His mood this morning seemed morose.

"Eat!" he ordered, shoving the gourd into the ready hands.

Sparhawk's smile vanished, and a spark of temper gleamed under his lashes. But, voicing no resentment of the black's rough manner, he ate deliberately. The food now was solid meat, farina and fruit, without suspicious flavors. Wiping his bearded lips with the back of a hand, he coolly said:

"*Graças.* Now I want a smoke and my razor."

"*Si?* And what else?" sarcastically queried the other.

"Oh, plenty. First, to know where I am."

"*Si?* Look outside."

Sparhawk arose, tucked his shirt inside his breeches, glanced down at his feet, which were bare. Then, swaying a little, but walking surely, he padded to the door. Beyond, he expected, would be jungle or river, with perhaps a couple of negro huts—although he had heard no voices. When he saw the reality he stood agape.

A broad clearing, sloping gradually, extended from lofty forest to a narrow creek. In it rose two large tribe houses, heavily thatched, shaped like his own small shelter. Along the shady sides of those structures lounged light brown men, leisurely making wooden weapons, or squatting inactive. Several women with deep pack baskets were walking toward the jungle wall, apparently heading toward some plantation farther back in the woods. These were young, straight, shapely and, except for tiny aprons, were completely nude.

At sight of those virtually unclad forms, male and female, the white man frowned with misgiving. If an isolated negro felt like going almost naked, his preference held no special significance. But this was something different. Indians who were semicivilized, or who had only occasional contact with white men, usually wore clothes of some sort, if only to repel insects. These people must be wild; not only wild, but hostile to—

The thought halted. His eyes swung suddenly to a corner of his own hut, where something had moved a little. There, loafing easily, loosely holding a long spear, was an Indian, obviously a guard. His slant eyes glimmered coldly at the unarmed white; and, meeting that implacable stare, Sparhawk knew he was among untamed, untamable savages. His own lids narrowed. Bleakly he surveyed the brawny figure. Then he swung back to confront Remédios.

"You see where you are?" gibed the black.

"Yes and no. Who are these people?"

"Surucairis."

"Eh?" The ejaculation escaped involuntarily.

"Surucairis. Nice people."

A corner of the black mouth lifted. The lips of the white one thinned. Surucairis were cannibals.

"And I," continued Remédios, with evident malice, "am chief of these nice people. We hope to like you."

Sparhawk's mouth thinned still more. Then, with a glance at the gourd, he recklessly answered:

"So that's why you're saving me? You'll have to wait awhile, you damned cannibal *cafuzo!* I won't get fat for some time, I promise you!"

The epithet disturbed the other not at all. On the contrary he grinned.

"Fat is not necessary. Bones and muscles make good stew. But Surucairis eat only enemies. Perhaps if you tell truth you may live long."

"In this place? Huh! That's pleasant."

"More pleasant than some other

things." The chief's tone hardened. "Now sit down! Tell truth! Tell all! Why came you into our land? Answer!"

CHAPTER III

PAROLE

FOR a moment Sparhawk gave the chief of savages a defiant stare. Then, outwardly cool, he ambled back to the hammock.

"That's easy," he retorted. "I've already told you the truth. Believe it or not."

"Your story is too thin," asserted Remédios. "You had best make it thicker."

"Oh, yes? Well here's all of it:

"I came down to Brazil to investigate general business conditions for my uncle's firm, Stokes, Sparhawk and Company, export and import. I did the coast towns, then came up the Amazon to Manáos. That ended my work. Hanging around there and waiting for a downriver steamer, I heard about Anton LeBaron. I decided to come on up here and see what more could be learned about him. So I outfitted and came.

"A trading boat carried me to Saopaulo, and a rubber supply launch brought me up the Ricapuyo to Cachoéira, and there I got a canoe and six *caboclos* to fetch me farther. After a while they lost their nerve. And one night they deserted, leaving me asleep on the shore.

"They were reasonably decent about it. They stole my rifle and some other things, but they left nearly everything I really needed. I camped right there for several days, waiting for some other canoe to come along. But none did. So I started walking along the bank, upstream. After awhile I found a path leading inland and tried to follow it. But it must have been an animal trail, or else I strayed off it. It disappeared, and I couldn't find it again. I was lost. Then I wandered around until I got sick. And that's all I know."

Throughout the concise narrative Remédios eyed him unwinking. Now he sniffed.

"Your story still is thin. What of the man LeBaron?"

"I'll let you answer that one," countered Sparhawk. "What about him?"

The black face contracted.

"What do you mean?" the native demanded.

"Some say," deliberately stated the white, "that he was eaten by Surucairis."

"Oh, do they? That is not truth."

"No? Then what is the truth?"

"He was not eaten by Surucairis!" snapped the bushman. "Answer my question!"

Anger vibrated in the commanding tone.

"Oh, very well. It's about like this—"

Sparhawk repeated the facts and conjectures given in the clipping concealed in his notebook, adding:

"That's really all I know about him. And I got that out of a magazine article on Brazil at the American consulate at Manáos."

"Humph! And years after a man dies you come looking for him?"

"Well," drawled Sparhawk, "some say he's not dead."

"*Não?* Where is he, then?"

"Well, some say he went insane and goes wandering about like a wild beast. Several men claim to have seen him—a white man, naked, with a long beard and a bow and arrows. Others say he is held captive by some obscure tribe. Still others say he has gone native. But nobody can prove any of those things or tell just where to find him."

"Ah. What was the appearance of that one?"

"I don't know. There are no pictures of him at Manáos, and I didn't find any one who remembered him."

An odd glint came into the chief's eyes, which roved aside. Studying him, Sparhawk said suddenly:

"Now see here! You know the truth about him. You must know it. He traveled all around this region. All Indians knew of him. You, chief and

medicine-man of your tribe, can't be ignorant of him. Is he dead or alive—and where?"

The persistent questioning angered Remédios again. Scowling, he rasped—

"Whose business is that?"

"Oh, nobody's, maybe. But the world would like to know. And if he's dead, or crazy, or otherwise useless, the records he kept would be valuable if they could be found."

"Huh!"

The retort was scornful. But on the scoffer's face came a meditative look.

"And for you," tempted Sparhawk, "there might be a good reward for those records—and for the truth about LeBaron. A fine rifle, perhaps, or—"

He stopped. The black mouth had twisted in a contemptuous sneer.

"What would *you* get for them?" gibed the bushman.

"I? Nothing. I just happen to be interested in books on exploration, and I would like to put LeBaron's work into the right hands."

For a long minute the chief's suspicious gaze bored into the steady eyes of his captive.

"You are a fool," he grunted.

With that he stalked to the door.

Through the opening Sparhawk watched the stocky black shape. Without a backward look, the dour chief strode straight to a house which, a little advanced from the two long tribal *malocas,* was similarly shaped but much smaller. Equidistant from the communal structures, it stood on a low platform of earth and looked especially well built. Near its door loitered several brown men, evidently waiting to consult the master. He passed them without pause, shoved his door open and slammed it shut behind him. The Indians looked at one another, turned, walked disappointedly off.

"Nasty sort of cuss, aren't you?" murmured Sparhawk. "Yesterday I liked you; but not today. But what could be expected from a renegade nigger mongrel? Oh, well, now let's see . . ."

Hands under head, he lounged awhile thinking, eyes occasionally traveling along the walls or out through the doorway. At length he arose, sauntered to the portal, leaned there in apparent idleness. The guard at the corner glanced at him, but remained impassive. For a few minutes the captive gazed ostentatiously at the big houses and the indolent shapes in their shade; then let his eyes drift to the creek. Canoes lay there, but in them were no paddles. And while he looked in that direction another dugout appeared, bringing a small party of hunters, who disembarked, lifted out a couple of wild pigs and plodded homeward, all carrying their paddles with them.

Sparhawk frowned and surreptitiously scanned his own doorway. The wall of thatch was about two feet thick and very dense. In the heavy door frame were slots for insertion of a stout bar. On the outer side of the door itself were large wooden hooks, firmly pegged home, in which that bar would rest.

Turning back, he closed the door, shutting out the watchman; then he stepped to the rear wall. From this he stealthily drew bits of wadded thatch, which clung stubbornly. All at once he jerked back a hand, then sucked a pierced fingertip. Something had pricked him. Investigation disclosed long black thorns imbedded in the palm fiber; many of them, hard and sharp as barbed wire, so thickly interspersed that no digging hand could avoid them.

"Damn!" he muttered. And after carefully replacing the stuff he had pulled out he lay down again, tired and dispirited.

CHANCES of an escape by night were obviously nil. Door barred, walls impenetrable, paddles unobtainable, jungle trails unknown, Sparhawk was completely at the mercy of the negro.

"Well, I couldn't travel far just now anyway," he philosophized. "And nobody ever knows just what another day

may bring forth. I may get a lucky break yet. Here's hoping!"

With which he resolutely banished all futile schemes from mind and held himself at rest.

Some time passed in which he subconsciously noticed the stillness of the place. Once or twice the raucous scream of a flying parrot sounded, but even this harsh noise was much subdued, muffled by the thick walls and roof. Otherwise he heard nothing. If any children played in the clearing they voiced no shouts. If any man or woman called to another the tone was low. The Surucairis seemed a silent people.

At length he stretched, arose, reopened the door, stepped out, and sat on the sill. The guard moved as he emerged, but then resumed loafing. Sparhawk deliberately surveyed him anew, involuntarily admiring his muscular symmetry. Then, glancing toward the creek, he saw other well proportioned men, some tall, some shorter, in or out of the water, standing, wading, swimming, enjoying quiet baths.

"I'm learning something," he told himself. "Always supposed cannibals were an ugly, filthy lot, totally disgusting. These savages are better built and cleaner than a lot of white men. I wonder if—"

The thought stopped. His roving attention had caught something more important.

Remédios had reappeared. He was approaching, carrying in one hand the captive's hat and boots, in the other his knapsack. As he drew near he smiled.

Astonished, Sparhawk stared. His wonderment increased when, obeying a curt order, the stalwart watchman ambled away with his spear. The chief, dropping the articles he bore, stood quiet a moment. He was chewing another cud, and his expression was benign.

"Senhor, I accept your story," he then declared. "And I wish you to be more comfortable. Here are your things—except those you are better without. All else is yours on one condition: promise not to try escape."

The listener's pupils contracted. The other's smile broadened.

"No doubt you have already learned that you can not go through these walls," he bantered. "The floor too is impassable—full of rock. This is the *prisão*, prison and pest house, built to hold even madmen. I can confine you most securely if I will. But I prefer to let you move about and improve your health. What say you?"

Sparhawk nodded.

"Very well."

The black spread his hands in a gesture of complacent amiability.

"*Bom!* Do not forget. You can by no possibility go far without being overtaken. Anywhere in this clearing you may go unhindered. Walk, bathe, visit the houses, do whatever you please—within reason. Keep your distance from the women. Do not touch weapons. Show sense."

"Very well," repeated Sparhawk, his face expressionless.

The chief chewed again, swallowed, eyed him.

"I go away," he then announced. "I shall see you again two days hence. Until then you will be well cared for. Shut your door tightly at night. Animals sometimes prowl. Be careful at all times. *Até logo!* Goodby for awhile!"

With a wave of a hand he started away. Sparhawk, unanswering, looked after him, down at his knapsack, up again, and rubbed his hairy jaw slowly and speculatively.

"This is so sudden," he mused. "Must be a catch in the thing somewhere. But—"

Rising, he called belated appreciation to the retreating black.

"*Graçãs*, Homem! You're a very decent fellow!"

Homem dos Remédios paused, scowling back in the sunglare.

"You are wrong," he said with short ungraciousness.

While the Northerner stared again, he marched to his own house and vanished.

CHAPTER IV

A VOICE IN THE DARK

INSPECTION of his bag brought to Sparhawk both pleasure and disgruntlement. His pipe, tobacco, and matches all were there; and the first long inhalation of smoke was pure joy. Everything else which had been in the sack or in his pockets was there also except jack-knife, compass, shaving kit and camera. But the absence of razor and picture machine evoked growls.

"Why in hell can't I clean my face?" he complained. "I'm not fool enough to try cutting any throats. And what in hell did he keep the camera for? That couldn't harm any— Oho! That might be why!"

Memory recalled a case wherein a murderer was caught because an unnoticed tourist had taken a casual snapshot of him working as a roustabout.

"Uh-huh. It's something like that," he surmised. "He's from somewhere outside, that's plain. And he had reasons for joining the cannibals. Tough baby. Swallows his tobacco juice. Eats man meat too, maybe—urrrgh! Cut that out, Wallace! You think too much!"

Completing his examination, he took new socks and his boots, donned his hat and walked boldly to the creek. The other bathers now had gone. Along the *malocas* men stood up to watch him, but none advanced. Stripping, he waded out, swam, floated, and then, feeling himself quickly tiring, emerged and bathed more methodically. Thereafter he sat awhile, back to the houses, face to the creek, body luxuriously cool in a gentle breeze and the shade of a broad bush. Biting insects were few; so few that, recalling the torturing swarms down the Ricapuyo, he thought:

"I'm certainly a long way from where I stopped. And maybe I've slid into hell, but right now it feels like heaven."

For some time he sat there undisturbed; then, dressing, he returned to his unguarded prison. Up at the *malocas* the spectators had quadrupled in number, comprising men, women, children, all watching keenly, but none approaching, nor, so far as he knew, speaking. When he reentered his hut they slowly dissolved.

"Surprisingly decent," muttered the captive, who had half expected to be jeered and otherwise plagued by children, if not by their elders. Then, lying down, he forgot them.

For the rest of that day he was alone, except at meal times. Food was brought by a woman, somewhat elderly, lank cheeked, flabby breasted, yet bearing traces of former comeliness of face and form. Depositing the edibles and a calabash of water on the sill, she waited outside until he finished eating. Her gaze at him was impersonal, her attitude uninterested, as if she performed a routine duty for one toward whom she felt neither amity nor enmity. In return, he ignored her.

The afternoon rain, usual in the upper Amazon region, kept him within doors, though not in bed. His notebook, hitherto blank, now came into use for jotting various notes and sketching the scene outside. About Homem dos Remédios he wrote nothing; there was little chance of forgetting the appearance or characteristics of the negro. His short memoranda dealt with the details thus far observed concerning the Indians and their houses, the size and construction of his prison, and similar subjects. Even as he wrote he smiled derisively at himself, feeling that these random records would prove as useless as the vanished studies of LeBaron. However, they served to occupy his time.

Toward night the weather grew worse; and, fed to repletion, he slept early. No new guard was posted outside, and if any sentinel watched elsewhere he remained invisible. Bringing in the heavy bar, which lay alongside an outer wall, the captive leaned it against the door at the angle which would hold it most firmly shut. Thereafter he knew nothing more until morning.

The following day was not nearly so

monotonous.

At first, loafing and smoking on his doorsill, he contemplated the morning activities of the habitants. Men went forth, in groups or in pairs or alone, carrying bows or blowguns or fish spears, and faded from sight in the forest or down the stream. Women with pack baskets walked to the woods, as on yesterday, and were gone, unescorted and unafraid; others, at log troughs or clay fireplaces, toiled to make the daily bread of farina from *mandioca* roots. Boys armed with short weapons practised shooting arrows or darts at a tree trunk. Smaller children walked or crawled about beside the *malocas*. All was so peaceful and orderly that savage customs among such folk seemed unthinkable.

Rising, he sauntered toward the nearer tribe house, where weapon makers again were occupied in the shade. As he advanced every eye fastened on him, and all work stopped. The squatters stood up and, when he reached them, regarded him unwinkingly. Most of them were middle aged, but physically as fit as the younger men who had gone hunting. Regarding their eyes, he found in them no such malicious mockery as had been shown yesterday by the guard. Like the serving woman, they masked all feeling.

Strolling onward, he paused before a doorway, peering in. Smoke drifted thinly out, and in the interior dimness glowed small fires. Ignoring the sphinx-like men, he walked in. At once the portal behind him darkened. The men were following.

A CURIOUS cold feeling came between his shoulderblades, but he walked on without a backward look. As his sight adjusted itself he distinguished details ahead. The place was truly communal: one long hall, without partitions, wherein all tenants lived as a crowded family. Little individual fires smoldered here and there, unused at present, but kept alive against need. Hammocks hung in rows from cross beams, and above some were blowguns, suspended horizontally in loops of cord to preserve straightness. Clay cooking utensils littered the floor at apparent haphazard. Along the walls were miscellaneous articles too varied to hold the observer's eyes, which focused on the owners. These, mostly women, feigned ignorance of his presence, continuing to walk about, squat softly talking, or sit suckling babes.

From end to end Sparhawk moved, touching nothing, addressing nobody, unhindered and unhurried. Emerging at the farther door, he looked behind for the first time. The men still lounged along at his back; but their hands were empty. Before starting to follow him they had laid down all weapons.

"That's decent," he thought. And he crossed to the other house.

Here he met something that gave him pause. A man was coming out, grave faced, carrying a tiny burden. He halted momentarily, confronting the white intruder; then coolly passed on. In his arms lay a baby boy, evidently newly born. It was alive, but misshapen; one arm and one leg shorter than their mates. With this he stalked straight toward the forest.

Again an odd chill settled on the beholder's back. He watched the Indian go into the jungle and vanish. He stood, still watching, for some time. At length the tall brown figure reappeared against the greenery, advanced stolidly through the sun glare, strode into the *maloca*. His arms now swung loose at his sides.

Sparhawk did not enter that house that day. Thin lipped, he turned and walked down to the creek. Ruthless destruction of the unfit was efficiency, and this man-killing forest was no place for the rearing of cripples. But a shadow seemed to have come over the clearing which had just looked so pleasant; and for the moment he wanted no more contact with its people.

Squatting and smoking beside the wa-

ter, he realized that among the mature savages he had seen none so aged as to be infirm. His scowl deepened. Evidently all weaklings, young or old, were dispatched with scant compunction. This was quite customary, he had heard, among the wilder tribes of the Amazon affluents. But now he no longer found it difficult to believe that these quiet men, who deliberately slew their own children and parents, were cannibals.

When some of them came down to bathe he avoided them, walking off to his own house. Still restless, he presently moved onward to the jungle edge, where, a few feet inside the fringe, he sat on a projecting tree root. No guard came across the clearing to keep an eye on him. To all appearance he was free to sneak off and try his luck at escape. But presently he learned otherwise.

Overhead sounded a swift hum, a soft thud, a sharp hiss. To the ground flopped a writhing green shape, reptilian, venomous, vicious. Startled, Sparhawk stared at a *louro machaco* tree snake pierced by an arrow. The deadly creature, swinging down from a leafy bough to drop on him, had been spied by some unseen watcher who still remained invisible.

"Damn this place!" he muttered. And he strode back to his pen which, somehow, seemed no longer a place of confinement but a sanctuary.

There, glancing back at the treacherous forest and then over at the house of the chief, Sparhawk smiled tightly and added:

"Well, you're keeping your word, Homem, and I'll keep mine. I'm certainly being well cared for, and I'll show sense. Hurry home, old gorilla! I want to ask you some more questions."

With which he set to writing more notes.

A lone bath when the creek was empty, a bounteous dinner, and a long siesta passed the rest of the day. Rain came, but ceased at sundown. The sky cleared, and among lazily drifting clouds a bright moon shone down. Unwatched, Sparhawk again became restless.

The clearing was deserted, the *malocas* shut. He walked to the water, contemplated the canoes, looked wistfully downstream, turned away. Heedless of the warning against prowling animals he rambled along the jungle edge, listening to occasional outcries back in the forest, where predatory beasts or reptiles took their toll. Then he walked along the walls of the lengthy tribe houses, hearing nothing from within. Last he reached the advanced house of Remédios, paused, stood looking at its door. Then he listened intently. Inside, he thought, he heard a low voice.

It seemed to mumble, then stop. After an interval it seemed to speak again, muttering a few sentences. Or it might be another voice this time. Two men, perhaps, were there, talking in secrecy. Or was there any voice at all? If so, whose? This was the chief's house; and he had seemed to live alone. Now he was away. Or had he come back, bringing some one with him?

Curiosity overmastered caution. Sparhawk stole forward, listened again, heard nothing. Softly he pressed the door. With a slight creak, it opened. Moonlight lighted up a yard of the hard earth floor. Beyond was blackness.

Suddenly there sounded a wrathful growl. Something sprang up in the gloom.

"*Andate!*" crackled fierce command. "*Fora!* Get out!"

As the snooper involuntarily backed, a heavy clay jar, furiously hurled, smashed against the door, which banged shut.

Astounded, somewhat ashamed, somewhat angered, Sparhawk slowly withdrew. When he reentered his own hut his mind was a confusion of amazement, bewilderment and conjecture.

That shape, dimly glimpsed in the dark beyond the moonshine, had been pale. It could not have been the negro. It might possibly, but not probably, have been a very light Indian. But no angry Indian here would have spoken

Portuguese. He was almost sure that the unknown antagonist was a white man.

CHAPTER V

SPARHAWK DOES SOME THINKING

THE mystery of the voices remained unsolved during the next day and other days thereafter.

Throughout that day Sparhawk saw nothing of Remédios or of any stranger. Nor did he detect any sign of life at the mysterious house, except once, when a woman walked to it from one of the *calocas,* entered it with casual familiarity, and soon sauntered forth. She was light skinned, maturely formed and, as seen at a distance, decidedly good looking; and her air of assurance indicated that she was privileged to visit the chief's quarters at will. She might be his housekeeper, or possibly his wife, living in a tribe house, visiting his domicile at intervals. Speculatively watching her, the Northerner thought:

"If he were home, that might explain what happened last night. She'd be the light one I saw, and he'd be the black one I didn't see, and who nearly brained me. But as it is— Well, time may tell. And meanwhile you'd better keep your nose out of what doesn't concern you, W. Sparhawk, or you'll get it smashed, and it'll serve you damn well right."

To which conclusion he afterward adhered, at least concerning the black's private affairs.

On the following morning the absent ruler was once more present. Standing in his doorway, he gave audience to several Indians who, after brief conference, divided, some going to one *maloca,* some to the other. Apparently they comprised two house committees, who reported daily to the black, received instructions, and executed them. Sparhawk, watching from his doorstep, nodded appreciation of the negro's organization. Too, he comprehended for the first time the strategy of the black in living slightly aloof, at exactly the same distance from each of the big houses. By so doing he favored neither as his residence and maintained impartiality toward both communities.

"There's a brain inside that sooty skull," thought the American. "If he'd only been born white and given education he'd have been somebody."

Remédios, now alone, looked over at him, then walked toward him. Sparhawk eyed him warily, half expecting harsh censure for his recent prowling by night. But the other gave no indication of knowledge of that intrusion. Languidly chewing, he gave bluff greeting—

"*Como vae?*"

"Very well—" Sparhawk stood up.

"You look much better. Have you lacked anything?"

"Only my razor— And my camera."

Remédios made a short gesture of self-reproach.

"Ah, the razor! I meant to bring it, but forgot. You have earned it by keeping your word."

"Glad you think so. But how about the camera?"

"*Como?* Is it not in your bag?"

Sparhawk probed the other's gaze, finding it unreadable.

"No."

"*Não?* Then it must have dropped out somewhere. But what of it? It is not necessary."

His voice seemed to harden slightly; and the captive did not press the point. Instead he said—

"I shall appreciate the razor."

"You shall have it."

A pause ensued. Remédios chewed reflectively, swallowed, regarded the other with enigmatic calm. At length Sparhawk blurted—

"Well, what's on your mind?"

"You are," coolly declared the negro.

"Oh, yes? Well, it's easy enough to get rid of me."

"*Certamente.* But I have not decided just how."

The prisoner found himself stopped for a moment by the satiric tone. Then he countered:

"That's simple. Tell me what I want to know and turn me loose."

"That would, indeed, be simple."

The chief's voice now was sarcastic. Nettled, the Northerner challenged—

"Are you afraid to?"

The expected scowl of anger did not appear. The long face remained unperturbed; the ruminative jaw moved deliberately on its cud; the speculative eyes held steady.

"*Si,*" came the laconic answer.

Sparhawk stared.

"Why?" he asked.

Remédios continued contemplating him as if he were some abstract problem. After a while he moved onward, leaned against the shady front wall, and changed the subject.

"There seems to be no trace," he said, "of the man LeBaron."

"Oh, have you been investigating?" eagerly queried the American.

Again the negro withheld reply; face and eyes remained noncommittal. Sparhawk's gaze grew skeptical.

"How could a man so well known disappear without trace?" he derided.

"Easily. Many men have vanished so in the forest. Men from this place sometimes do." The chewer swallowed, then went lazily on, "There are many destroyers. Huge serpents which swallow men whole. Crocodiles which drag men under water. Electric eels which paralyze men so that they drown, and fish which devour them. Jaguars which tear men apart. And other things. And if any traces are left they may disappear quickly or remain undetected. Rain washes out tracks. Bushes change overnight. Bones—if there are any—may lie where the best searchers miss them. *Si,* there are many ways. You yourself are utterly lost to any one who might follow your crazy trail. It leads to water, and ends there. Beyond is nothing."

"Not even footprints on the shore?"

"Not now. We made a few when we landed. But rain has wiped them all away. And you now are many miles from that spot, on a different waterway, in other country. Not even the Indians of that part know we passed through their territory."

"How's that? You were out of your own country?"

"*Si.*"

"Doing what?"

"Hunting, perhaps." A corner of the dusky mouth quirked. "The people thereabouts are not our friends. So we traveled very quietly."

STUDYING him, Sparhawk's pupils contracted slightly. That long trip into hostile territory had not been made merely to kill ordinary animals. At best, it must have been to square an account of blood revenge; at worst, to satiate cannibal appetite.

"You see, then, how easy it is for men to vanish," placidly continued the chief. "As for those wild guesses you heard outside, they are very wild. That insane white man with the long beard is not LeBaron. He is one Macedo, a Portuguese. A restless but harmless lunatic whom no Indian will harm, because the jungle demons would take vengeance on any one unnecessarily killing him."

"Eh?"

"But yes. The demons have taken his mind, but let his body run about to amuse them. Any man who spoils their amusement will suffer a horrible death. All jungle people know that."

"Hm! That's a quaint idea. But you're sure the fellow's not LeBaron?"

"*Certo.* And as for those other guesses—*quem sabe?* That LeBaron is a captive somewhere is not impossible. But where? That he has become, as you say, native, is also not impossible. But again, where?"

"Why ask me?" countered Sparhawk. "How should I know?"

One black shoulder shrugged.

"I wondered what might be your ideas about those guesses."

"I haven't any. One guess seems as

good as another."

The Northerner's tone now was guarded, his sidewise gaze probing. Under guise of giving a little information, the negro was, he felt, slyly trying to draw him out.

Remédios did not meet his gaze now. Eyes dwelling on the forest across the clearing, jaw shortly moving, he loafed a little longer. All at once he straightened up.

"Who cares?" he suddenly snarled. "The man is dead. And to hell with him!"

With that he strode off toward the *malocas*. Astonished by the tigerish change of mood, Sparhawk frowningly watched the black back recede; then he filled his pipe and blew a slow drift of smoke.

"Temperamental, aren't you?" he mused. "And a liar to boot, I'm thinking. At least you know a lot more about LeBaron than you've let out. Now I wonder— Say! Was it—"

He took a swift step forward, stopped, slowly shook his head. Could that white shape in the chief's house that night have been LeBaron? Had Remédios gone to him somewhere, brought him back, conferred with him about this new American who sought him? But no, that would hardly be sensible. Any conference could have been held more easily at some more secluded spot; anywhere in the vast, thinly populated jungle. The sudden idea was preposterous.

Was the white, on the other hand, the crazy Portuguese, Macedo? Or was there any Macedo? Were Macedo and LeBaron the same? Or—

"Steady! Hold everything!" Sparhawk muttered. "This isn't getting you anywhere. And you're not going anywhere, anyway, so why the rush? Take it easy, and watch for what comes along next."

Wherewith he sat again on his sill and smoked, outwardly unconcerned.

Remédios disappeared into one of the *malocas*, emerged after a while, entered the other, reappeared soon. Apparently he had completed a tour of inspection, finding all as it should be. Outside his own house he stood looking across at the nonchalant smoker. Then he turned in at his door and was gone.

A little later, as Sparhawk gazed absently toward the creek, a boy approached, laid something at his feet, and departed. The lounger joyously picked up the compact leather case containing his toilet articles.

"I take it all back, Homem," he said. "You may be a liar in some ways, but when you promise anything you come through. Now just promise not to eat me, and I'll be very comfortable. Meanwhile, thanks!"

Grinning, he waved a hand toward the chief's house, where the door stood partly open. No response came. But as he entered his own shelter to commence removing his beard he felt that the black had watched, and that the friendly gesture had not been wasted.

CHAPTER VI

UNDERCURRENTS

THE shave for which Sparhawk had been yearning was more effective than he ever fully realized.

To him the removal of the prickly, itchy growth from face and throat brought a gratifying consciousness of cleanliness and a subconscious increase of self-respect. To others it brought a change of feeling which, though gradually more noticeable, he neither analyzed nor ascribed to his altered appearance. Habitually somewhat heedless of superficialities, and now careless of the opinions of dumb Indians who went almost naked, he gave no thought to the fact that to his immediate world he had been one sort of man and had become quite another.

The fact was that his stubby dark beard, several days old when he was first found, and thicker now, had not only half masked his countenance but given him a rough, unkempt appear-

ance verging on the villainous. To Homem dos Remédios, experienced in reading faces, that unprepossessing exterior had not been an indubitable indication of the stranger's character. But to the savages one prejudiced look had been enough. Moreover, they, like several other Amazonian tribes, kept themselves hairless, except above the eyes; all hairs of face or body were scrupulously plucked; therefore a hairy visage was, to their sight, filthy. Thus, for more than one reason, they found the aspect of the unshaven captive repellent, if not repulsive.

Now, when the alien appeared with his real face bared, he drew even more attention than on the occasion of his first public bath. Without intention to exhibit himself, and moved only by random desire to stir about, he walked over to the *maloca* which he had not yet visited; the one whence the malformed baby had been banished to death. As before, men working or loafing there arose from squats to stand wordlessly watching. This time, however, their gaze was more intent, dwelling on the good humored mouth and other features which hitherto had been obscured. When he passed within doors they muttered brief comments, then followed.

Inside, too, the transformed tenant of the pest-house attracted more obvious notice than when visiting the other community. Men, women, children stared full at him, and as he walked along a low murmur of voices was audible. And when he left the shadowy structure and turned to an adjacent shed, where a number of girls were working at the usual preparation of farina, he met scrutiny even more naïve.

Every movement halted. Every girl stood frozen, brown eyes wide, lips open, mind riveted on the new masculine countenance so unexpectedly seen. For a moment the tableau held. Then a quick laugh brightened one of the absorbed faces, the others smiled swiftly, and all turned again to the job. Thereafter, although he loitered for several minutes watching the process, the workers maintained complete composure and pretended unconsciousness of his proximity.

That girlish laugh, involuntary relief from surprised rigidity, was the first merriment he had heard among these outwardly stoical aborigines; and as he sauntered onward he marveled at the vivacity momentarily displayed by the demure maidens, as well as at their striking attractiveness when they showed feeling. Already he had observed that the women of this tribe were generally better looking than the dour men. And now, with their fleeting betrayal of interest vivid in his mind, he thought:

"Some of these little girls aren't half bad. And if one of them should take the notion to like me a lot and thereby preserve the life of a poor young man trying to get along, who am I to object? Old Captain John Smith wasn't too proud to let Pocahontas save his one and only skull from the tomahawk. And LeBaron—umph!"

The whimsical fancy stopped short. Yes, LeBaron had taken an Indian woman to help him along. And when his work was done he had, perhaps, prepared to leave her. And then what had happened? Where was he now? Dead? Crazed? Captive? The same old questions, but now lighted from another angle.

Back into Sparhawk's memory drifted a fragment of Kipling:

> When the early Jesuit fathers preached to Hurons and Choctaws,
> They prayed to be delivered from the vengeance of the squaws.
> 'Twas the women, not the warriors, turned those stark enthusiasts pale.
> For the female of the species is more deadly than the male.

His jaw set. And thenceforth he completely obeyed Remédios' terse warning to keep his distance from the women.

As for the men, slowly he noticed a slight lessening of avoidance, a look more human, a casual familiarity with

his presence, which he attributed to the facts that they had grown used to him and that their chief did not yet desire his death. That they would kill him whenever so ordered he had no doubt. So, although avoiding offense, he made no effort to fraternize with them. Since they spoke no language but their own jargon, any such effort would have been useless even if attempted.

The chief himself, as the days passed, proved increasingly eccentric. Each morning the black called on him after inspecting the *malocas;* and often, though not always, he lingered to talk awhile—or, rather, to listen to the talk of his prisoner. He himself was taciturn, answering only such questions as he chose not to ignore, meeting others with stony silence or sudden sneers. His moods were capricious; sometimes tranquil, sometimes sour, sometimes snappish, or darkly ugly. Whatever his mental attitude, whether he stayed a while or went almost at once, he always studied the Northerner's clean, expressive face. But whatever conclusions he derived from these observations he kept to himself.

SPARHAWK'S own moods varied as did those of the erratic man who had saved him, yet might any day slay him. Sometimes he liked Remédios much; at other times he disliked him even more. He was, however, learning patience and exercising more tact toward his captor. Without showing subservience or exerting himself to be agreeable, he nevertheless refrained from ruffling the negro's good humors or exacerbating his ill tempers by repetition of questions evidently vexatious. In particular he repressed further reference to LeBaron. Since the day when the black had verbally consigned the lost explorer to perdition he had scowled or snarled at every mention of the name. And, since harping on the unsolved problem was worse than useless, Sparhawk let it alone.

He did not, however, abandon all hope of eventually learning more about LeBaron. Still less did he despair of finally making his escape. Day by day his depleted reservoir of strength was gradually but steadily refilling toward its brim. With canny judgment he aided the inflow of vital force, exercising enough, yet not too much; eating hugely, drinking sparingly, resting judiciously, squandering no energy, allowing no fretfulness to fray his nerves. Although he knew himself to be as securely imprisoned by the merciless jungle as he could have been by stone walls or shark swarming seas, he clung to the idea of ultimate freedom as tenaciously as any other prisoner. Without that stubborn dream few captives live long.

Meanwhile he kept on taking notes and making small sketches, with neither ostentation nor secrecy. Seated on his sill with book open, he made no attempt to close it or hide it if Remédios approached. On the contrary, he once handed it to the black, who accorded momentary interest to the pictures, looked blankly at the writings, and handed it back with the cynical comment—

"Much work over nothing."

And thereafter, although the chief of the savages sometimes glanced at a new picture, his attitude toward such notations was that of contemptuous tolerance of a puerile game. Occasionally, when in a bland mood, he even volunteered certain bits of information which the recorder openly jotted down. One of these was the reason for the inveterate hostility of all Rio Ricapuyo savages toward white or partly white strangers: brutality of rubber concessionaires, who enslaved whatever Indians they could catch and thereafter used and abused them with hideous cruelty.

Unemotionally he depicted such fiendish tortures of men, such ghastly outrages on women, by those Brazilian or Peruvian slave drivers, that Sparhawk's pencil stopped and his stomach squirmed.

"Chega!" he protested. "Enough!"

"It has been enough for us also," coolly replied the informant. "No rubber prospector caught in our land lives."

"But," objected the Northerner, "I stopped at rubber camps, and I saw no such abuses."

"Naturalmente. Such things are not exhibited to foreigners. You were welcomed, entertained, sped on your way, *não?"*

"Si," admitted the stranger.

"Si. And then you were deserted in wild country by the men given you by your entertainers."

With that the chief walked away. Sparhawk's brow furrowed. That was exactly what had taken place. And he recalled that he had seen virtually nothing of the workings of those rubber camps. Were the affable hosts there responsible for the perfidy of the paddlers they had so willingly provided? And—

He straightened, smitten by a new thought. Was the disappearance of LeBaron and all his records really due to savage treachery? Was it perhaps the sly work of unscrupulous rubber dealers far down the river? Had he known too much and, going forth to make his findings known to all the world, been intercepted and silenced? Certainly such inhuman tyrants as those described by Remédios would hesitate at nothing.

For some time he sat debating; then gave up the useless puzzling and took a swim.

At other times he learned various things about the savages, near and far, in the Ricapuyo region. All lived in subtribal settlements of varying size, scattered along unknown waterways, each settlement virtually independent of all others, each governed by its own local ruler. These two *malocas,* dominated by Remédios, were typical of others inhabited by members of the same nation, controlled by other chiefs. Only in case of serious intertribal war was any supreme commander appointed, and then only for the period of the emergency. Otherwise each community was sufficient unto itself. To a question as to whether other *malocas* of this nation were as well ordered as his own, the black, rather proudly, answered *"Não!"* Furthermore, the houses of some rival tribes, particularly of the cannibal Kukapotins, were mere dirty sties, and the people foul brutes. As for the Huitainas, he stated merely that they were clean and good looking, not much different from the inhabitants of his own territory.

Of the directions and distances to other habitations or other tribes he gave no information, turning on the questioner a quizzical glance of comprehension when any such query was put. Consequently Sparhawk learned nothing which might aid him if he should break parole. Showing no chagrin, the patient angler perforce contented himself with unimportant catches and continued his wait.

Most of the talking, however, was done by the American, who found himself speaking repeatedly of his own country. Such talk served as partial outlet for recurrent nostalgia, and seemed at times to interest the listener. The negro asked no questions, stood stolid, looked occasionally into the white man's reminiscent face, and at length stalked away without comment or farewell. Yet sometimes his eyes held a faroff look, as if he too were reviewing scenes and people many leagues outside this jungle clearing; perhaps at Manáos, or possibly even at Pará, the comfortable city at the mouth of the Amazon. Sparhawk, noting that abstraction, wondered more than once what could have been the uncommunicative exile's past. But on this point, as on others, he refrained from prying.

So the days slid past, each empty of action, each full of unnatural peace, each so like its predecessor that only a methodical succession of marks in the notebook kept the tally. The only noticeable variation was that at intervals

the chief vanished, not to reappear for two days. Where he went, or why, Sparhawk did not ask and could not guess. As the tally marks increased, however, he noticed that these absences came regularly, each sixth and seventh day. On the eighth Remédios was once more at his door in the morning, directing the communal routine.

"Funny," mused the American. "He takes his weekends off. Or are they weekends? Wish I knew what the days are. Anyway, the system's the same. What d'you do with 'em, Homem? Shoot African golf and lie about business with some other chief? Or go hunting and kill a— Whoa! Quit that!"

He shook his head and banished the unwelcome thought—a grisly vision of a private cannibal feast off somewhere in the gloomy forest, where some lone enemy had been trapped or run down.

"Hell, I don't believe they're cannibals at all!" he told himself, looking into the grim but not brutal visages of some men nearby. As ever, they inflexibly met his gaze, studying his expression and features for the hundredth time, giving no insight into their own minds. And once more he felt the sensation, very familiar now, of bafflement; that, and the other feeling, also grown habitual, of dormant but ever present danger.

Turning from them he mutinously eyed the tall walls of his forest prison, always menacing, yet always holding back. And to that inimical jungle he muttered:

"Well, come on, start something! I'm getting tired of waiting."

He had not much longer to wait.

CHAPTER VII

OUT OF THE JUNGLE

SUNNING himself on the creek bank after a swim, Sparhawk turned his head quickly, then sat motionless. A few feet away, regarding him with candid curiosity, stood a boy child. The youngster was white.

White, at least, by comparison with all others of his age hitherto noticed. Perhaps four years old, he was, like all other small native boys, completely naked. His skin, exposed to many suns, was yellow, with a slight smoky tinge of Indian heritage. Yet it was far lighter than the indubitable brown of other little folk who now watched absorbedly at a wary distance. His features, too, although infantile, seemed differently molded: the lips more delicate, the nose slenderer, the cheekbones less pronounced, the eyes less oblique. His sturdy frame, however, was typically Indian. So was his grave expression. Like their fathers, babes here seemed unable to smile.

Although Sparhawk had long refrained from further tours of the *malocas* and had ignored all children, he marveled that he had never noticed this odd lad. Now he and the unexpected arrival stared with mutual interest. To the outlander's face the youngster gave only brief attention. His brown eyes dwelt on the bather's long body, whiter than his own.

Up the hillside, in the shade of the big houses, several of the sluggish squatters arose and moved about, looking creekward. Recently the prisoner's daily swim had been almost unnoticed, drawing no such gallery as at first. Now, however, the number of beholders began to increase, more emerging from the doors. Suddenly sounded a call in feminine tones. The boy stood unmoved. Again came the call, sharp, imperative. Then down the slope came a woman, head high, step determined, attitude angry.

"Better go, son," chuckled Sparhawk.

The boy looked at him, at the advancing woman, and for a moment stood his ground. Then, however, he obeyed, walking with neither haste nor hesitance, as if to make it evident that he went of his own free will. The woman stopped and waited; and when the sturdy boy reached her she laid no hand on him. Wordless, the pair returned to a *maloca*, the other children following.

All went inside. No sounds of punishment followed. The watcher recalled that never since his arrival had he heard a child cry or seen one struck.

As he unfolded himself and dressed he frowned thoughtfully. That woman, either mother or guardian of the nearly white boy, was the one whom he had seen enter the exclusive house of the black chief. Although somewhat lighter in color than many of the other women, she was unquestionably Indian. There might be a modicum of white blood in her, but by no means so much as in the child. Who was that little fellow's father? Not an Indian, he felt sure. Still less, the negro.

"LeBaron?" something whispered.

The guess held him quiet a moment. Then he sighed, shrugged and, as usual, gave it up. LeBaron might have had a woman here, as well as among the Huitainas; fathered a child, and gotten himself killed in consequence. But the suspicion was baseless. The boy might have been born far away from here, stolen from some semicivilized settlement down the Ricapuyo. Or there might be a dozen other explanations. The only man who could reveal the truth was Remédios, now away on another of his mysterious absences; and any attempt to quiz him on his return would be worse than useless.

That same night, however, came a possible clue—only to vanish.

Again there was moonlight. And again Sparhawk was restless. After an hour or two of unsuccessful effort to sleep he removed the leaning bar from his door and, clad only in breeches, walked forth.

As usual, the other houses were tightly shut, the clearing empty of all life, the forest silent save for infrequent unhuman voices. After an aimless ramble about the open space he squatted in the shadow of a tree beside the creek and absently contemplated the blank water. The slow flow of the peaceful surface had a quieting influence on his overactive nerves, and the openness was partial protection against attack by hunting cats. He now knew, from certain traces seen by daylight, that the warning by Remédios had been no false alarm; that jaguars or panthers sometimes invaded the settlement and even clawed at walls or doors, including his own. But those murderous beasts hated light, and seldom emerged from the jungle gloom while the moon shone.

So, for some time, he rested in comparative security, ears open to the night sounds, mind adrift. At length, growing sleepy, he straightened and swung a slow survey over the somnolent clearing. Then his lax nerves tightened. From the forest had come a prowler.

Silent, stealthy, it was crossing the bare ground toward the home of the chief. Its advance was alert, watchful, purposeful. It walked on two legs. It was a white man.

A white man, nearly or totally unclothed, ghostly in the pallid night light, not to be mistaken for any Indian.

Up to the black ruler's door it swung. There it paused, listening. A hand rose, laid itself on the dark wood, seemed to push. Then it jerked away and became a fist, clenched in anger. The portal had not opened.

Sparhawk sprang alive. Swift, noiseless, he sprinted to the edge of the forest. Heedless of any lurking beast or night snake, he stole fast along in shadows until the towering bulk of *a maloca* intervened between him and the white ghost. A swing around the rear of this structure, a flit to the back of the chief's house, a creep along one lateral wall, and he was near a front corner. There he paused until his breathing was under full control. Then, stepping with utmost care, he moved to the angle and peered around it.

THE man still was there, standing baffled and irresolute, scowling at the door. In one hand he gripped a short wooden stabbing spear. Just as Sparhawk's gaze centered on him, some ani-

mal screamed near the forest edge. The prowler's head jerked toward the noise, away from the lurking spy. That spy snatched his opportunity.

With a leap, a dash, and a diving tackle he hit the intruder headlong. While he was in air the other spun to face him, spear darting aloft and down in fierce defense. But the hurried stroke missed. The next instant both were on the ground, the assailant snatching new holds, the overthrown man resisting clumsily, half stunned by violent impact. A few seconds later Sparhawk held his quarry helpless, back flat on earth, arms pinioned, body burdened with the full weight of the victor. As the fallen man scowled upward he ceased struggling and eyed his conqueror with manifest amazement.

His staring dark eyes took in every feature of the American's face, roved down his white chest, rose to dwell again on the set countenance of the outlander. His own visage was almost concealed by long, unkempt, low hanging black hair and high grown beard. But the visible skin of thin cheeks and blunt nose was whiter than Sparhawk's; white with the unhealthful pallor acquired by white men long resident in humid jungle devoid of sun.

"Hullo, LeBaron!" suddenly said Sparhawk.

No answer. The upturned eyes narrowed, blinked, looked puzzled; the brows drew down in apparent incomprehension. Intently studying him, the captor became convinced that the vacant expression was not feigned.

"*Quem é?*" he demanded. "Who are you?"

A quick glimmer under the bushy brows proved that the Portuguese words were understood. But no vocal response came. Instead, the bleached face took on a cunning look, and the eyes darted to the door of Remédios. Then they glanced from side to side like those of a trapped animal uselessly but instinctively seeking a line of escape. Evidently the brain under the long hair had recovered from the double shock of attack and fall and was figuring chances.

Sparhawk, too, looked about. The door remained shut. Nothing moved in the clearing. But sudden uneasiness seized him. This man might not have come alone. The animal scream might not have been that of an animal. The shadows along the *malocas,* which had concealed his own approach, might be hiding other creatures creeping at him in turn. His back was unprotected, his hands weaponless. Forthwith he again acted.

Locking one fist in the shaggy beard, he reached aside for the fallen spear, then got up. The stranger swiftly scrambled up in turn; but, held fast, made no resistance. With the point of the weapon pressed hard into the other's side, Sparhawk led him toward his own hut, meanwhile vigilantly watching everything. No menace showed itself anywhere. The lank, wiry, beclouted white savage walked without opposition, seeming quite desirous to get away from the house into which he had so recently tried to sneak. At the jail entrance he balked an instant; but then, forced onward, went in without remonstrance.

Inside Sparhawk released him, taking his own stand beside the open door, back to a wall. The bearded man peered narrowly about, observing hammock, knapsack, clothes, water jar, all other evidences that this house of isolation was his captor's habitual domicile. When he again looked at Sparhawk he grinned, teeth gleaming in the thin moonshine from the doorway. Shoving a thumb toward the outlander, he hoarsely taunted—

"*Prisioneiro!*"

"*Si,*" coolly assented Sparhawk. "I'm a prisoner. So are you. Who are you, and what do you want here?"

The other's grin turned sly. He surveyed the questioner from head to toe, and gave a low chuckle. His thumb twitched toward the chief's house, then toward the forest beyond.

"*Vamos!*" he urged. "We grab him!

We run! Free! Come!"

"Grab him?" Sparhawk regarded the fellow curiously. "What do you mean—grab him?"

"*O rapaz.* The boy."

"Boy? What boy?"

"*Branco.* The white one."

He chuckled again, thumb waggling expressively jungleward. The Northerner stood speechless a moment. Then he bluntly asserted:

"You're crazy. That boy's not in the chief's— Back up, you!"

A sudden snarl had sounded, and the lean body had started forward, hands lifted and hooked like talons. Halted by threat of the spear, the fellow stood growling, face malignant. The growls subsided to inarticulate mutters, the hands sank, the taut body relaxed. And Sparhawk realized that his brusk charge was literally true; that the marauder was insane. Moreover, he now guessed that crazed rover's identity.

"You are Macedo," he declared with a bluntness that would not admit denial.

A quick tightening of the hairy mouth showed that the surmise was accurate. The muttering ceased. Warily the lunatic watched his conqueror. His attitude was that of a wild animal at bay.

"Why," probed Sparhawk, speaking less aggressively, "do you want the boy, Macedo? What is he to you? Tell me, and perhaps I can help you get him."

The bait brought a rise. The lowering visage brightened, the compressed lips opened.

"Company! My boy! Walk woods together! My boy!"

"Eh?" Sparhawk could not repress a start. "Your boy? Is he your son?"

A momentary pause, while Macedo squinted keenly at the inquisitor. Then, boldly:

"*Sil* My son. He belongs to me. Come, we free him. You come with us. I lead you free, *prisioneiro! Vamos, presto!*"

He started forward again.

"*Alto!* Not so fast!" warned Sparhawk.

MACEDO halted, again growling. Sparhawk eyed him, inwardly debating. To the proffer of liberation he gave no thought; the crackbrained project of kidnaping was impossible; and only an imbecile would accept the guidance of a madman. To the truth or falsity of Macedo's claim to fathership he also gave scant consideration at present. The immediate problem was what to do with the fellow, who, plainly restive, would be hard to control much longer.

To lock him up and hold him for Remédios to deal with on his return would mean to bar himself out all night. Moreover, he, Sparhawk, was neither servitor nor informer, bodyguard nor jailer, for the negro; and, although the mad Brazilian had obviously come ready to murder the chief in pursuance of his scheme, he had done no harm, so . . .

By the way, how did the door of the absent black happen to be locked tonight?

The thought turned his attention out across the clearing for a few seconds. Instantly the problem of Macedo's disposal was solved for him.

Perhaps his expression had betrayed his noncompliance to the sharply watching prisoner. Now, quick and hard as a pouncing jaguar, the wild man sprang. With a violent shove he knocked the momentarily unobservant Sparhawk sprawling out over the low sill. And without pause he plunged through the exit and fled.

Sparhawk, scrambling up, glimpsed the white shape vanishing around a corner of his hut. He lunged after it, found it at the rear, far out of reach, sprinting for the woods. A few seconds later the madman was gone.

"Humph!" Sparhawk muttered, somewhat chagrined, but relieved. "Well, that's that. One knockdown apiece, making the bout a draw. Gate receipts, one Injun spear to hang on the wall of my den. So long, cuckoo! I'm glad you called, anyway. I know now that you're

not LeBaron, and that Homem's not always a liar."

Reentering his house, he tossed the spear aside, shut and barred his door, lay down, reviewed the maniac's declarations. Macedo wanted the boy as a companion to walk the woods with him; to be his boy—whether or not he was his son. Queer; a little pathetic, in a way. But crazily selfish. From the boy's standpoint it would be far better to grow up in this ordered community, even as a cannibal, than to become a mere beast. Even if the Brazilian were his father.

He stopped thinking to listen. Two dull thuds, vague but forceful, had sounded somewhere on a wall. He half rose; heard nothing more, lay back, and went to sleep.

When the light of a new day shone at the ventilation holes, Sparhawk awoke and walked out to seek a clue to the meaning of those two odd thuds. On a slant sidewall he found two arrows deeply imbedded; arrows shot with such fierce strength that only the extraordinary density of the barrier had stopped them from going through. They were at just the right height to have hit him in his hammock.

"Well, you damned white snake!" he swore. "If I ever catch you again I'll pull your fangs! That's a promise!"

Tugging at the shafts, he found them too firmly fixed to withdraw without much effort. So he left them there and returned to his door, to await the bearer of his breakfast. Lolling there, he soon saw something that brought to his lips a low whistle of surprise.

The door of the chief's house opened. Out from it came the fair skinned woman and the nearly white boy.

Across to a *maloca* they walked, the woman sauntering with her usual indolence, the boy capering with the energy derived from a long sleep. Obviously they had spent the night in the domicile of the negro.

Macedo, though mad, had not lacked knowledge of realities. Perhaps he had also spoken the truth. The light woman, now apparently mate or mistress of the black, might be his former wife, the boy his son. And in that case—

"What of it?" shrugged Sparhawk. "Mind your own business, Wallace!"

And, straightening up, he turned away and went inside.

CHAPTER VIII

REMÉDIOS MAKES A PROMISE

"WHERE did you get this?" Homem dos Remédios, holding the wooden spear of Macedo, questioned Sparhawk in tones suddenly sharp. The American, puffing at his pipe, grinned and tantalizingly withheld reply.

The chief, materializing from nowhere as inexplicably as he disappeared each weekend, had caught his prisoner shaving. Until the task was finished he had lounged in the doorway, slowly chewing, and gazed out across his small domain. His mood today seemed quite genial. But when, glancing casually around the interior, he discovered the weapon lying where it had been tossed, that good humor dropped instantly from him. Two swift strides, a pounce, and he held the crude but deadly thing in his fists, scowling at it.

"Answer!" he commanded, mouth hardening, spear point sinking to a level with the white man's abdomen. At the threat the Northerner's grin died. So did his recent diplomacy.

"If you would stay here and mind your business you might know what went on," he retorted. "I took that thing away from a fellow last night at your own door. He seemed to be intending to ram it through your guts. I'm sorry I didn't let him."

The negro stared. Then he sneered: "*Mentira má!* A poor lie!"

"Believe it or not!" snapped Sparhawk. "And be damned!"

Insolently he turned his back and walked out. The black face behind him

tightened, the brown eyes narrowed, but no vengeful thrust followed. On the contrary, Remédios again scanned the weapon, noting every detail of shape and finish. Then his crooked smile flittered across his face and was gone. He strode after the rebellious white man.

"*Perdão!*" he exclaimed. "Your pardon! I believe you. How did this come about?"

His expression again was friendly, his voice winning. Sparhawk eyed him stonily, ambled around a corner, stopped before the two deeply buried arrows.

Remédios, following, halted short; then seized an arrow shaft and pulled, shoved, forced the missile through the wall. Again he went inside. When he emerged for the second time his hands were empty, his expression unreadable. He had discarded the spear, inspected the arrow point, formed his own conclusions from the evidence. Now he laconically repeated—

"*Perdão!*"

"Granted," replied Sparhawk, somewhat mollified. But he still stood stiff, smoking. The black chewed silently a moment, then laid a hand on his arm.

"Why did you do it?" he asked. His tone was more amiable than ever before. Sparhawk eyed him sidewise, and his subsiding resentment crumbled into nothing.

"Oh, just for exercise," he declared. "It was like this—"

Succinctly he narrated the sequence of events up to the point where he had heard the two thuds. Of his own subsequent surmises concerning the woman and the boy he said nothing. Instead he concluded:

"And that makes us even, Senhor Homem dos Remédios. If I owe you anything for happening to come along and prolonging my life somewhat, I figure the debt is paid. Any argument?"

Remédios, looking absently at the remaining arrow, did not dispute the specious assertion. He might have replied that his action in picking a starved wreck off a creekbank, his restoration of that wreck to health, his parole of his prisoner afterward, were hardly compensated by an unpremeditated defense of his locked house while he was absent. But this sarcastic rejoinder, typical of his usual moods, did not come. Instead, he presently answered:

"*Não.* No argument. But why did you not make Macedo guide you away? You had him. You are strong now. Why did you stay?"

"Oh, I wouldn't trust him."

"Do you trust us?"

"Hm! Well, not much. But still—"

Sparhawk paused, somewhat at a loss.

"But still," Remédios caught him up, "you would rather remain among us than take to the woods?"

"Er—well, I don't know. I just didn't feel like going."

"Ah. It was not, then, because of your promise?"

"Oh, partly, perhaps. I'm not sure. Anyway, what of it?"

"It was well for you that you kept your word. Macedo seems now to be associating with the Kukapotins."

"Eh?"

"*Si.* The spear and the arrowhead are Kukapotin."

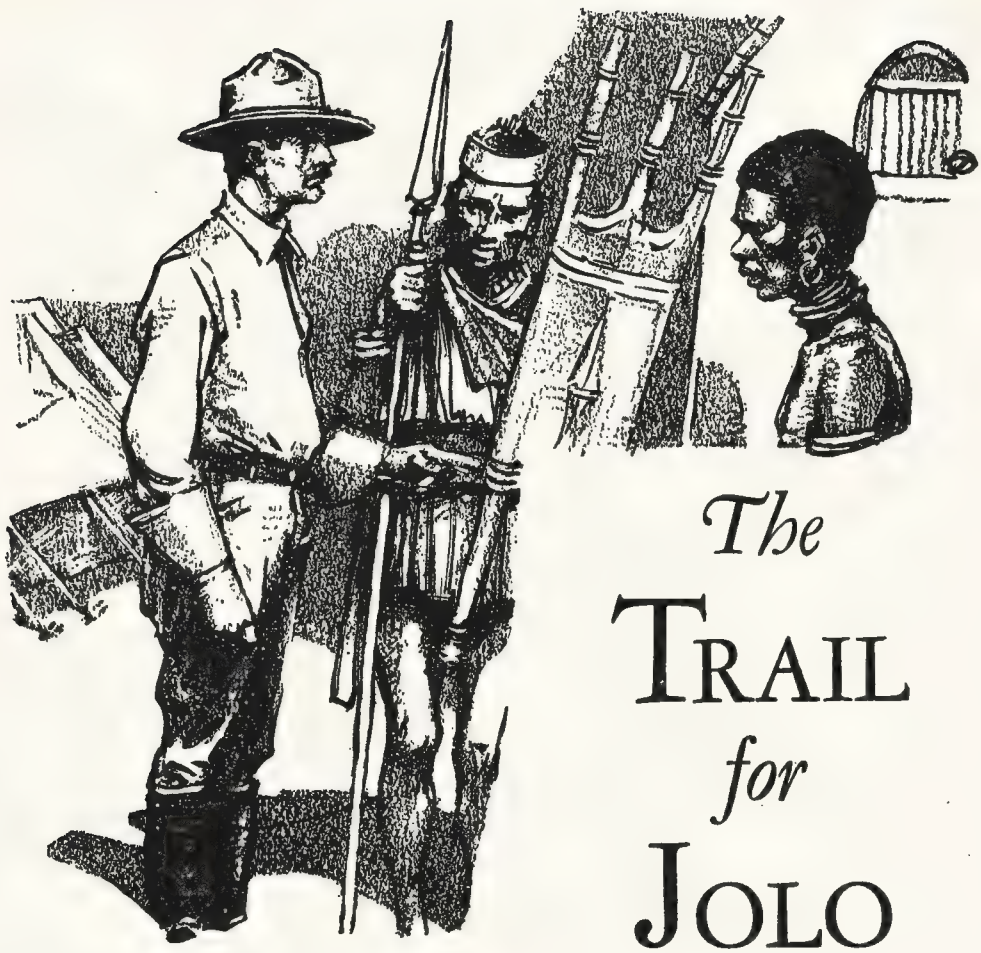
As the full significance of the statement dawned, Sparhawk grunted grimly. The bestial Kukapotins would have given him short shrift if the cunning maniac had misled him. And of him and the pale boy they would have made a grisly feast. That this had been Macedo's purpose he had little doubt. The vindictive effort to assassinate him through the wall was plentiful proof of the white savage's malevolence.

"It seems," he dryly remarked, "that the fellow is not so harmless as you said."

Remédios nodded.

"Mad brains go from bad to worse. The madman now has become a mad dog. And I shall kill him at sight."

TO BE CONTINUED



The Trail for Jolo

By ARED WHITE

LIEUTENANT ERIC BALE, Infantry, on duty as officer of the day and making the rounds of the sentry post inside the walled city of Jolo, thrust his head sharply toward the dumpy little post commander who was seated under a shady palm in front of post headquarters. He executed a stiffly precise salute and swung his face to the front again as Major Hopper acknowledged the courtesy with a careless toss of his chubby hand.

The major's watery eyes followed the young officer down the white coral sands for several soberly reflective moments. Officers had been saluting Major Hopper thus for some days past; ever since the first Moro *juramentado* had swept down upon a sentry post the week before from the *cottas* of Dato Majasari, to wreak a gory Mohammedan vengeance upon three American soldiers of the garrison. The major saw it all suddenly, out of such a salute from Bale, most dependable and best balanced of his younger officers. The restrained politeness of his

own adjutant, the stiff formality of all the junior officers, were now unmasked in their true light to the major's somewhat slow understanding. It was that frigid formality by which juniors vent their outraged feelings upon their seniors.

The sagging lines of the major's face stiffened, a spark of fire lighted in the pale depths of his gray eyes. He bellowed at his adjutant, who came with a grave face and an exaggerated deference.

"The Major called Lieutenant Hoyle?" the adjutant inquired.

"Yes, and I want you to cut out that sugary nonsense, Hoyle," snorted Hopper. "You've been hating me under your belts, the whole pack of you, ever since I wouldn't let you go out in the jungle and bait these savages. I want a stop put to it. It's ruinous to morale. Now, you have officers' call sounded immediately after retreat. I'll tell you all a few things!"

"Yes'r," said Lieutenant Hoyle without the slightest change of expression, and saluted stiffly.

Major Hopper, having sensed and diagnosed trouble in the garrison, turned back to his newspaper well satisfied with the action upon which he had determined. He had his orders and he would follow them. Nor would he tolerate masked resentment from a pack of hot blooded young whippersnappers who burned to invade those Mohammedan jungles and make a mess of things. The major was an ancient file whose military sun rose in the Civil War, topped its zenith in the Indian campaigns and was now setting in the Philippines. There was a legend that he had been a dashing Cavalryman in his younger days; but if so his blood had cooled in the long hard routine of isolated garrisons of a decade preceding the brush with Spain. He was slow moving, slow thinking, though still possessed of a sharp peppery voice when it came to passing out orders.

The problem of riding herd over several thousand Mohammedan Moros, Uncle Sam's latest acquisition, fretted Major Hopper not at all. The walled city of Jolo, taken from the Spanish without the firing of a shot, was proof against Moro design. Moreover, the United States was now negotiating a treaty with the Sultan Jamulul, spiritual and political dictator of Sulu, whose word was reputed law among the heady tribesmen. It was, therefore, the major's mission to preserve peace and good will by the exercise of due caution and prudence, until the pending treaty was consummated by Congress, Jamulul already having subscribed the royal name for a cash consideration.

"To the colors" brought the major to his feet with his hand at the rim of his campaign hat while the field music played the flag down for the night. The sun was poised low over the horizon, the tropics now in their most blissful and enchanting mood. Jolo lay as serene as a painted picture with its heavy Spanish barracks of 'dobe stone, its glistening thoroughfares of coral sands lined with palms, coconut and mango trees; its background of flaring green hills beyond the protecting walls, its foreground of the restless Sulu Sea as blue as a wild canary's egg.

The sharp notes of officers' call sounded, and he sat down to bury himself in belated newspapers from the States while the officers gathered.

"Lieutenant Hoyle has to report to the Major that the officers of the garrison are assembled," the adjutant broke in upon him.

Major Hopper cast his newspaper aside, gave his adjutant a withering look and turned to the assembled officers. Their faces were fixed straight to the front, their whole manner seeming to say that they knew how to obey orders even if their commanding officer's methods were not to their satisfaction. The major was very erect, his lips compressed, a slow fire smoldering in his eyes as he searched their faces and read their humor.

"I sense a feeling here I don't like," he began in a drawling voice that quickly changed to a sharp, querulous crackle. "Because a few heathen outlaws have run amok, and a few heathens have thumbed their noses at us, and some threats have drifted in from a jackass *dato,* you want to go out there and make a mess of things in the jungles. Now drop that idea immediately! Get me? I have my orders from Manila. Manila has its orders from Washington. Those orders are to subdue these Moros by moral suasion. Get that? Moral suasion!"

The major paused to look sharply from officer to officer in emphasis of his ultimatum and to observe its effect.

"I am advised that the proposals of lasting peace offered by the sultan of these great jungles have been duly approved by Congress. It will become effective as soon as the documents reach Jolo from Manila. In the meantime, any resort to undue force on our part constitutes a breach of faith. Now get this straight. No fighting except to repel attack. No firing by sentries, except in strict line of duty. It is our duty to show these Mohammedan heathens that we Christians want to live with them in peace and be their big brothers. Those are my orders, gentlemen, and those orders are going to be followed. Now that we understand one another I want an end to this internal sulking in the garrison. That's all, gentlemen!"

Seventeen hands rose to hat brims . . .

AT THE junior officers' mess the lieutenants picked glumly at their dinner. Major Hopper's address had solidified, rather than dissipated, their bitter gloom. Three military funerals in a week, four men in hospital with serious *barong* wounds; strident taunts from strutting savages outside the walls, lurid threats reported from sneering *datos* out in the hills; an atmosphere tainted with suspicion, hatred, contempt, all of the red passions of the jungles, and fanned by a spineless policy of inaction. Their grievance flooded their minds as they ate. It was not fair to their men, of whom they were the protectors. Reprisal, a show of force, a demonstration of the superior prowess and fighting stamina of the Americans, and those Moros would be singing in a different key. Major Hopper might have his orders, but he had some discretion in applying them. If he had red blood in his veins he would march out the trails in a bold show of intrepidity, whether he fired a shot or no. Officers began expressing themselves in low, grim voices.

"Turn this garrison loose on the island, and even the sultan would be begging for mercy in a week," said Lieutenant Haight, junior officer of K Company, under Bale. "But if we stay cooped up here doing nothing, they'll be coming over the walls after us, next thing."

"Yes, and if they get cocky enough, sure enough that we'll not fight, they might get away with Jolo one of these nights," muttered another officer. "Confidence is a great weapon."

"Moral suasion!" sneered Haight. "That might work after they've had a good, sound thrashing, but not until. Those *panditos* will keep right on anointing their *juramentados* and sending them against our sentry posts until the Krags speak to them about it. I've a mind to tell the Old Man just what I think. Those three men of my outfit they killed were worth more than all the heathens in Sulu."

Lieutenant Bale took no part in the exchange. His face was solemn and thoughtful, but free of the glum resentment that was rampant at the mess. As the commander of K Company, he was hard hit in the loss of a dependable noncom and two seasoned privates of long service. He had his own thoughts, but he felt in duty bound to keep them to himself, at least at a junior officers' mess. Presently as his junior lieutenant waxed more and more eloquently critical, Bale looked up sharply.

"That will be all, Haight," he said in

a low, firm voice. "Remember K Company is not a debating society and does not criticize its orders."

"The Lieutenant's pardon, sir," Haight responded quickly, without resentment.

During mess the sun tumbled into the Sulu Sea and the black shadows dropped over Jolo like a heavy curtain. Lieutenant Bale left at once on his rounds of the sentry posts, finding his way readily where the starlight picked out the narrow white streets. There was a tension that came each night with darkness, a tension that Bale could feel stirring in his veins as he moved on from one sentry post to another. Threats had come hurtling down from the fastnesses of Mt. Bud Daju, threats of a mass assault upon the oasis of Jolo. There were rumors of secret openings through the Jolo walls, of scaling devices by which a thousand Moro warriors, fired to frenzy by their *datos* and *panditos,* might pour through under cover of darkness to hack their way to Mohammedan glory by wiping out to the last man this Christian citadel.

To these rumors Lieutenant Bale paid small account, except that they unsettled his men and kept them on a raw edge at guard duty. His own concern was of skulkers, jackals of the night, lurking for a chance at a knife thrust. Or fanatical Moros approaching with signs of friendship until within reach with their *barongs.* After the casualties of the past week among the men of K Company, Bale found them very much on edge tonight. By the hour of tattoo some of the veterans were hurling challenges at empty shadows. There was a shot just before taps. The sentry swore he had seen the glint of starlight upon a *barong.* At midnight a series of shots rattled into the darkness from the No. 1 gate. Investigation disclosed nothing more ominous than a prowling Moro dog. Bale assembled his sergeants.

"Recruits, eh?" he rebuked them. "What will the post commander say of a company that keeps the garrison awake shooting at jungle spooks? Now tone those men down and tell them not to shoot again unless they know what they're shooting at!"

Bale's rebuke had the effect of a sedative upon the jumpy nerves of K Company. It reminded the men that they were seasoned soldiers and not raw recruits. Thereafter the succeeding sentry reliefs held their vigil in cool restraint, determined to challenge or fire only upon a clearly established target. Lieutenant Bale, though he might have contented himself with three inspections—retreat, midnight, reveille—remained out all night. Not in any fear of a further outbreak of shadow baiting. Bale's confidence in his men was as implicit as their faith in him. But, so long as there was a possibility of danger to his sentinels, he chose to remain close at hand—ready for any emergency. With his notions of what constituted a good officer, Bale could act in no other way.

The night passed without further incident. Dawn cracked suddenly, heralded by the lusty crowing of fighting cocks in the native village outside the walls, the raucous yapping of mongrel dogs. Moroland was awake before breakfast, but seemingly in a docile mood. The main posts had been doubled while the night was breaking, favorite hour for jungle mischief. But as a scarlet flame flashed into the sky ahead of the racing tropical sun, the extra sentries were relieved. Jolo settled down to the alert but easier vigil of daylight.

There was a loitering group of Moro villagers outside the No. 1 gate, staring, laughing, chattering, thumbing their noses at the newcomers in khaki. The natives never tired of this diversion, safe enough since the hot headed Spanish had been ousted from Jolo. They were careful to keep beyond the deadline, some fifty yards from the sentries; a line established against the menace of Mohammedan fanatics, Moros who had been goaded by the priests to try for the great heaven that was to be attained in a welter of Christian blood.

BALE was at the main gate, observing the magnificent discipline of his sentry post under the insolence of these loafers, when a familiar figure pattered up to the deadline, deposited his *barong* on the ground in token of friendly intent and signaled for admittance to the walled city. The sergeant in charge recognized the fellow, a renegade Bajaos named Aglima Almi, native spy of the garrison, and admitted him. Aglima, a stubby little stalwart, was heaving like a broken winded horse, his face twisted in high excitement. When the lieutenant attempted to question him, the Bajaos slipped past with a stammered evasion and headed at a run into Jolo with whatever news he brought from the jungles.

Two squat natives detached themselves from the villagers and approached in Aglima's wake. Many such came each morning; messengers from the sultan's palace at Maibun, Bajaos looking for a menial job in the garrison, pearl traders with a rare bargain to show. These two claimed to be fish vendors from Bus-bus. They looked peaceful enough, their hair had not been anointed nor their eyebrows shaven by the *panditos,* as in the case of *juramentadoes* on a projected blood debauch for Allah. After an exchange with them from safe distance the corporal outside the gate ordered them to leave their *barongs* on the ground and approach.

They slouched forward, lazy, guileless natives, until they were within a yard of the corporal's three men. Then they leaped into a sudden, murderous frenzy. Out of the sagging folds of striped loincloths came two blunt *barongs* with which they attacked with the furious abandon of madmen. The corporal and his two men met the danger instantly, without indecision. Three Krag rifles came up, three shots rang out, fired pointblank. The first Moro dived into the coral sand. The second one was hit, but his Moslem frenzy carried him on against the corporal's bayonet. The impact impaled the assailant. But with his last strength he lunged harder against the bayonet, forcing the blade deeper into his leathery carcass. Before any one could fathom his desperate ruse he had impaled himself to chopping range of his *barong* and cleft the corporal's skull.

Lieutenant Bale leaped forward with drawn pistol. But no intervention could have been swift enough to prevent the tragedy. He steadied his men with a word and gave a few short, decisive orders. The first centered caution against the natives beyond the deadline who were looking on with gloating eyes. The second was an admonition against reprisal. The third he repeated in Spanish, in a voice that reached the villagers and brought a howl of outraged protest.

"When I send a burying detail up," he commanded, "plant these two Moros outside the gate—and throw the carcass of a pig in the grave with them!"

The wails of the natives were ringing in his ears as Bale turned back into Jolo and marched direct toward headquarters. Burial with the carcass of a pig meant that the two Moslem heroes were robbed of their Mohammedan heaven, their spirits condemned to perdition by the ruthless command. Not even the chants of the *panditos* could save the souls of faithful Moros so condemned. The commotion gave Bale a grim satisfaction. He knew his reprisal would rouse the Moro fury in the *cottas* and jungles. But he had long burned with an unspoken wish to bring the festering sore of Jolo to a head. And Major Hopper's explicit orders on moral suasion had not covered the burial of Mohammedan fanatics run amok.

"Well, right on the spot," exclaimed the adjutant, when Bale stalked into headquarters. "I was just sending a messenger for you, and here—"

"I wish to see the commanding officer immediately," Bale broke in bluntly.

The adjutant's brows converged as he sensed the lieutenant's mood.

"I just heard you lost another good

man, Bale," he said. "I'm terribly sorry. But you can make your report of that later. It isn't what the major wishes to see you about, I gather."

"That, however," Bale rejoined, "is what I wish to see the major about."

"See here, Bale," the adjutant remonstrated, lowering his voice, "you're carrying a chip on your shoulder. The old man is in a fretted humor over something. Now isn't the time to bait him with your views. I'd dislike to have you upset his opinion of you—he thinks you are the best of his unit commanders."

"I'll be without a command, sir, if I'm going to let my men get chopped to pieces one at a time," Bale replied bitterly. "Kindly announce me to the major."

Hoyle stiffened and barred the way.

"As adjutant," he announced, "I wish to know first the precise nature of your business with the commanding officer."

"I made that perfectly clear, Hoyle. It is time our men have the benefit of a stiffer command policy in dealing with these savages."

"Personally, Bale, I share your sentiments," said Hoyle. "But as adjutant, charged with carrying out the major's policies, I forbid you to take the matter up with him."

"You told me a moment ago," Bale rejoined icily, "that the commanding officer had sent for me. Inform him that I am here."

Lieutenant Hoyle gave a grimace of unwilling consent, one that said he had done his duty in warning a friend and was helpless to go further. He led the way across the office to the major's door and threw it open.

The major usually received his officers in phlegmatic silence, staring heavily at them while they recited their business and passing judgment in a few words. But Hopper was now in an unusual state of animation. He sat bolt upright at his desk and his face was fretted and anxious.

"Glad you came in promptly, Bale," he exclaimed. "Close the door, Hoyle—and you may remain in the room, as there will be some orders to issue presently."

"Sir, I have a matter to place before the major, if I may have a few moments," Bale spoke up as Hoyle was at the door. "I have just lost another man, one of my noncommissioned officers. Moros amok again."

"Yes?" said Hopper abstractly. "Make your report of it in writing presently. The men should keep these fanatics at a safe distance. Now, what I wanted—"

"But, sir, I wish to offer my opinion," Bale cut in. "The impulse for these attacks is coming from the jungles. These *barong* men are being put up to it deliberately—and it's getting worse. This makes four men I've lost in a week, sir."

Major Hopper's red face took on a purple tinge.

"One morning, once, I lost forty-seven men before breakfast," he said caustically. "But I never liked to boast about it. When I want your opinion, Bale, I'll let you know. In the meantime, I've got instructions for you."

"Yes, sir," Bale responded. He lowered his voice, but without yielding. "I have no wish to appear insubordinate or disrespectful. But my duty to my men compels me to say frankly that with a stiffer attitude toward these Moros—"

THE purple tinge became a flood of color. Livid veins welled at the major's neck and forehead. He was of an ancient school to whom an order supplants the Bible. He sought the spirit of an order in its exact wording, weighing every word, even the commas and periods. And once he had made up his mind what an order conveyed, he put it into effect without modification for changed conditions or local circumstances. And any disagreement from the ranks struck him as just short of treason.

"Not another word from you, Bale!" he exploded. "I've never known you to lose your head this way before—and

I'm not going to hear something you'll be sorry for when you've recovered your senses. I have my orders to pacify this Island by moral suasion, with the cooperation of the Sultan of Sulu. Those orders come from the highest authority in the United States—the President. They're going to be obeyed to the letter, and I'll not stand to have them debated! You understand me, sir?"

Bale's level eyes did not leave the major's face. He swallowed hard, there was a slight tension at the muscles of his jaw, but no resentment in face or voice as he mastered himself.

"Very good, sir," he replied.

"Now to business," Hopper proceeded, in a milder but authoritative voice. "I've learned from a trusted native who came in from the hills this morning that there's mischief in the mind of a *dato* named Majasari. He's making wild threats of a mass attack on Jolo. That's nonsense, of course. But in view of my orders, I'm going to take no chances of a rumpus on our hands. Our native spy claims that Majasari is being baited by a Spanish intriguer, a pearl trader of Bongao. He says the *dato* is smuggling in a shipment of Mausers from Borneo, recruiting his forces, and will strike as soon as he can consult an Arab who is coming from Mecca with a charm. Our native insists it's true, claims the priests are working overtime in the mosques among this fellow's *cottas*. Personally, I suspect the rascal Majasari is sounding off hoping maybe we'll cross his palms. But I've decided to get the word to the sultan at Maibun immediately. You are familiar with the power of the sultan, are you?"

"Only by rumor since we've been here, sir," said Bale.

"His power is absolute," affirmed Hopper. "As the spiritual and political dictator of the Sulu archipelago he needs only take a pinch of his Mohammedan snuff and these *datos, paglimas, maharajahs* and *panditos* sneeze. The English bought him off—and had no further trouble in Borneo. He has his own army and his own way of enforcing his orders, and he'll act quick in this case, since his first payment under our new treaty is not here yet from Manila."

Major Hopper leaned back in his chair, surveyed Bale in austere silence for several moments.

"I am selecting you, Lieutenant Bale," he said shortly, "to march across the trail to Maibun to repeat what I've told you to the sultan!"

There was a sparkle in Bale's eyes.

"Very good, sir," he repied, coldly official.

"You will march direct to Maibun, starting from Jolo in the morning at reveille. It is twenty miles, with a clear trail. When you have informed the sultan of the situation, you'll return immediately with his reply. I'll send the Bajaos along for guide and scout. The natives don't seem to suspect his game, and you can trust him. Now tell me how many men you want."

Lieutenant Bale studied the top of Major Hopper's desk while he made a deliberate mental calculation.

"A platoon, sir," he decided. "Twenty-four men, picked from K Company, and two one-pounders from the mountain battery."

Major Hopper pursed his thick lips and scowled meditatively.

"Ahem, but I'd rather figured on a full company, perhaps reenforced, Bale," he commented. "While this is strictly a peaceful mission, it seems to me a larger force would rather serve—er—to discourage the possibility of any attack by irresponsible prowlers."

"Yes, sir. But the trail to Maibun, I've heard, is narrow, winding and mountainous. A platoon would be ample force for security, and would be compact to handle. It would offer less invitation to Moslem fanatics running *juramentado.*"

"The details are in your hands, then," Hopper decided after some further reflection. "Now hear your final orders. You're a courier to the sultan, Hadji Jamulul. When you report, be sure to

address him as your Highness. He's very touchy on that point. Remember at all times along the trail that your mission is to prevent trouble, not start it. You're not to fire a shot unless to repel assault, and I expect no trouble on that score. If you have no questions you may start your arrangements."

"Very good, sir," said Bale.

The adjutant trailed Bale out of headquarters.

"Listen to reason, Bale," he protested. "You know that a platoon isn't force enough. I didn't want to say anything before the Old Man, but you know as well as I do there may be serious danger out in the jungle, from the signs we've seen."

"The platoon I take will be picked men from K Company, every one of them an expert rifleman," said Bale, with quiet intensity.

"Yes, and you know it's suicide if Majasari should turn his Moslems loose on you!" said Lieutenant Hoyle hotly. "The major minimizes the danger—and you're going out with a chip on your shoulder."

"On the other hand, Hoyle, I'm going out to obey my orders—as I have a habit of doing," Bale retorted. "But if those Moslems insist on starting trouble —I'll have men enough to make it through to Maibun and back if the sultan himself tries to stop us!"

Bale selected promptly, without reference to the company roster, those who were to go with him. He had them relieved from guard, assembled under an isolated mango, and gave them instructions enjoining strict secrecy upon every man. He saw twenty-four glum faces light in sudden grim enthusiasm. But such was their discipline that there was not the slightest unsteadiness in ranks, not even an open smile of satisfaction at the glorious news. Every man of them was square shouldered, with the lithe or sturdy setup of a seasoned soldier. Every man wore the insignia of expertness in musketry. There was not a man of less than six years' service. Bale himself was the youngest man of the company he commanded, under twenty-five and appearing even younger with his clear gray eyes and smooth, even featured face. Yet even the older noncoms of K Company, men almost old enough to be his father, referred always to Bale as the Old Man.

THE first word the garrison received of something unusual afoot was when the expedition moved out to the southeast through the No. 1 gate at reveille and headed at a swinging stride through coconut groves and bamboo down the trail toward Mt. Bud Dajo. Bale held his force in close formation. Before daylight the Bajaos spy had gone pattering ahead to tell the Moros in the *cottas* that a peaceful American expedition was coming through. An advance guard of three men and a sergeant, under Lieutenant Haight, led the platoon by forty paces. Bale marched at the head of his platoon, formed in column of twos because of the narrow trail. Eight artillery mules, carrying rations, ammunition and the two dismantled one-pounders, were sandwiched in the center of the column. Two men and a corporal brought up the rear by twenty paces.

The sun was sizzling hot by the time the expedition cleared the litter of native huts and jungle and hit the mountain trail seven miles from Jolo. Until well along in the morning the men marched with ready hands at stocks of their loaded Krags, vigilantly searching out every bamboo thicket. But after passing several *cottas* to find the natives squatted in shade or peaceably at work behind carabaos, they settled down to an easier mood. Except for sullen stares from villagers and the irate chatter of monkeys that followed them with vivid simian abuse, the way to the sultan's capital proved as peaceful as the parade grounds of Jolo.

By mid-afternoon Bale moved his column down out of the high country into Maibun. The place was a mean-

dering jumble of bamboo shacks, thatched in nipa or cogon, thronged with naked children, half naked women and gawking Moro warriors of the sultan's first line. Shaggy mongrels yapped a noisy welcome to Bale's men, nipping fiercely at their heels until the column reached the sultan's palace, where native guards in striped turbans and gaudy tight pantaloons halted the visitors in high excitement, and sent a messenger scurrying into the palace for instructions. Presently a functionary came out, his station attested by scarlet jacket and the silver buttons on his tight trousers. His coppery face was intelligent and the repose of his manner was in contrast with the excited musketeers of the palace guard.

"I am Dato Calvi, his Highness' prime minister," the Moro introduced himself in Spanish. "His Highness would be pleased to know the occasion for this honor of your presence."

"I am come representing the American commander at Jolo," said Bale. "I have a matter of serious importance to discuss with the Sultan Jamulul. But first I would like to have quarters for my men, since we must spend the night at Maibun."

The *dato* bowed politely, made a gesture of welcome to Bale and cast a blasé eye at men and mules.

"You shall be the guest of his Highness at the palace," said Calvi, "but for your men, they must live where they may since we have no quarters for such a number. His Highness has just awakened from his siesta and is now at his prayers, señor. Anon he shall end his fast and then must he rest for a time. But during the night I trust he will be able to receive you."

"The information I bring should reach the sultan without delay," Bale urged with firm politeness. "I will take only a few minutes of his time."

"It is impossible to disturb his Highness in the present circumstances," said the prime minister with finality. He bowed again and made a sweeping gesture toward the palace door. "Will you honor me by waiting inside, señor?"

Bale declined the invitation with thanks and made use of the delay to settle his command for the night. Camp was established in the rear of the palace, a large stone structure done in the style of Spanish barracks, two stories high, windows barred in steel, heavy doors. The men were sent in relays, under armed escort, to bathe in the bay. Shelter tents were set up, mosquito bars hung for protection against the swarms of gnats and jungle pests, guards posted, the one-pounders set up for action. The palace guards steadied down and gave their attention to turning back at the point of Spanish bayonets the hordes of gaping villagers. Bale and Haight made a brief reconnaissance and found there was no symptom of hostility in the village. The fact that the detachment had been received in the sultan's grounds had served to disarm suspicion of the American invaders.

At Bale's direction the men turned in at dark in preparation for the start to Jolo at daybreak. His men disposed of for the night, he reported to the palace. A turbaned servant admitted him, showed him to a wicker chair in a bare room and left him alone. Several hours followed, hours of absolute silence except for the chiming of European clocks for which the sultan appeared to have a penchant. Shortly before eleven o'clock, when Bale was fighting hard against sleep, a barefoot but otherwise gaudily dressed palace functionary summoned him and led the way to the sultan.

Jamulul was a short dumpling of a man with protuberant, dead-fish eyes, puffy, badly pockmarked face and boorish air. On his head was a flaming scarlet turban, his only other garment a vivid yellow bathrobe. His feet were bare, his coppery hands littered with pearl rings. Jamulul, propped on a heavily matted wicker couch, stared without recognition, welcome or interest, and did not return Bale's salute. Two copper colored functionaries, one of

them the prime minister, bowed.

No word was spoken until a servant had passed a jeweled betel nut box, which Bale politely declined. Jamulul and Calvi helped themselves to the leaf and lime ingredients, chewed in bovine silence for a time, and finally settled to business.

"My commanding officer has heard of threats from the Dato Majasari," Bale said tersely. "He wishes your Highness to take such action as may be necessary to prevent trouble."

The royal person shrugged his porcine shoulders as his prime minister translated Bale's statement into the native lingo. When Calvi finished, Jamulul unleashed a spiteful expectoration of betel nut, scowled, then muttered briefly in reply.

"His Highness is much put out," the prime minister translated. "The payment from the Americans for his services in making peace is past due, and he is therefore delayed in going to Singapore for roulette and diversion."

"I can not speak of this with authority," Bale advised. "But I have heard that the payment will come soon from Manila."

There was another and longer exchange this time between the sultan and his prime minister. Jamulul grunted and chattered at length, emphasizing his words with many shrugs, and gestures of his pudgy hands.

"His Highness is much disturbed at another point," Dato Calvi explained. "His Highness had a pledge from a Spanish captain, who owed him a debt, that a Spanish *mestiza* girl should be made in payment. The captain left Jolo without paying the debt, and the girl since has married a Chinaman who is sheltered within the walled city of Jolo as servant to the American major. His Highness is compelled to demand that the girl be set on the trail to Maibun."

"I have no authority to treat of such matters," said Bale gravely. "I will repeat your statement to my commanding officer at Jolo. But I would appreciate his Highness' reply in regard to the Dato Majasari, who is said to threaten attack against Jolo."

"*Huy, señor,* but Majasari, murderous pig that he is, lacks the strength to attack Jolo," said Calvi, when he had consulted the pock marked Moro oracle. "Already has his Highness sent word to our loyal *datos* that the Americans are not Christians, but Presbyterians, and therefore Majasari can not incite the powerful Moslems to a holy war of consequence."

"Thank his Highness for his reassurance," said Bale, "but the major will want to know exactly what steps the sultan is taking to bring Majasari to his senses."

"*Que necio!*" swore Calvi. "But we will teach that *pajarraco* a lesson at the proper time. But now his Highness' force is scattered. Our minister of war reports the army in the hemp fields, and busy with the repair of his Highness' palace at Tulei. But if Majasari dares bare his *kris,* let your own rifles speak to him in a way that will bring him to his senses."

"That is the word his Highness wishes me to convey to my commanding officer?"

"*Sí, señor.* Majasari is a murderous pig," Calvi rejoined.

JAMULUL broke off negotiations with a grunt and a commanding jerk of his head. Two muscular retainers sprang forward and lifted the sultan to his feet. The *dato* offered an arm and, leaning heavily on his prime minister, the royal person ambled to a dining hall and seated himself at a long, clothless table. Bale was seated at the sultan's left, without the formality of invitation. If he thought the affair a midnight snack, he soon found himself at a repast that threatened to consume the night. Jamulul sat gorging himself on course after course, beginning with an atrocious bird's nest soup. Raw and dried fish followed, served in courses by naked

servants. Mangoes, coconuts, broiled lizard, baked grasshoppers followed in succession. Each course was washed down in native *cerveza* with occasional quaffs of *aguardiente*. No word was spoken. The sultan finally ate himself into a stupor, dozed briefly, woke up and ate more.

A commotion in an outer room caught Bale's ear as the sultan's dinner was nearing an end, a noisy chattering in native lingo, followed by the entrance of a swarthy officer of the sultan's guard, who jabbered excitedly into the prime minister's ear. Dato Calvi, excusing himself to the dozing Jamulul, left the room with the Moro officer. The chattering outside was renewed, a rattle of native jargon above which the voice of the prime minister rose in occasional question. Bale looked at his watch. It was near to four o'clock; the first cocks were crowing in Maibun. He long since had abandoned hope of sleep before the hike back to Jolo. Daylight would jump out of the sea shortly and find him with the problem of making a graceful exit from the sultan's presence. There could be no time to waste in getting his men on their feet, fed, packed and moving across to Jolo.

The prime minister returned in a quarter of an hour with a somber face, bent over the sultan and reported volubly. Jamulul roused himself with difficulty, attempted to listen, blurted incoherently and slumped back into his doze. Calvi persisted, finally shaking his Highness and forcing a swallow of *aguardiente* into the royal mouth. Jamulul choked violently, opened his eyes, listened for a moment, then dismissed the prime minister with a short explosion of native invective. The *dato* shrugged and gave up. Bale seized upon the moment to make his own excuses.

"I see his Highness is exhausted," he addressed the *dato*, rising. "Please convey to him my appreciation for his hospitality. I must get ready for the start back to Jolo."

The *dato* raised a protesting hand, sudden acute alarm in his face.

"Señor, it is not possible for you to leave," he exclaimed. "You must remain until his Highness has received the report I have for his ears."

"Sorry," said Bale, "but my orders are very definite. I have no alternative but to obey them. I'm sure the sultan will understand."

"But you can not leave now, señor!" cried Calvi. "Our trusted agent, Aglima Almi, who also serves you, as well as the insubordinate dato, Majasari, is here with word that the pig has closed the trail with his fighting men. He has even dared defy the authority of his Highness, Hadji Mahamad Jamulul Kiram, Sultan of Sulu!"

Bale's face lighted up with a sudden fervor, his eyes glowed. He replied as if he had not heard Calvi's words. Dato Calvi, his own eyes flaming in excitement at the alarm, blinked uncomprehendingly at the American officer's response to the warning.

"You will explain to his Highness, will you not?" Bale asked coolly. "Again accept my thanks for your hospitality —and now I must say *adios* and hit the trail for Jolo."

"Diantre, señor!" wailed the *dato*. "But by the great Toohan, it is your rifles, cannon and ammunition Majasari is after. *Huy!* But he vows to take them from you—and if he does, think, señor, the rifles and cannon might be used against the palace of his Highness!"

"Assure his Highness that he need not worry on that account." Bale smiled. *"Adios, señor."*

The platoon was up and packing when Bale reported at the bivouac. He waited until the men had eaten breakfast, then formed them in line as the night was breaking and told them of the report brought off the trail by the triple spy of Jolo. The only response was a brightening of sleepy eyes, a bracing of shoulders, a quick animation in deeply tanned faces. The column's formation was unchanged for the return march, except that the advance guard

was pushed ahead by a hundred yards, under Lieutenant Haight.

Bale set a stiff pace. The *dato's* warning had swept away fatigue, had served him better than a long night's sleep. He reassured himself that he was following orders implicitly. The alternative had offered itself of staying at the sultan's palace to wait for reenforcements from Jolo, or a gunboat from Manila. But Bale told himself that he was marching in peace. If there was trouble, Majasari must force that trouble. And if he did, Bale told himself grimly that he would be the sole judge of what measures to use.

On the march across from Jolo Bale had studied the terrain with a careful tactical eye. The danger point, he reckoned, lay below the gap in the hills, a low lying saddle, that led from the Maibun side toward the slopes of Bud Dajo. If Majasari's threats developed into action, it was there the Moros would lie in wait for their prey. At the approach to this critical point, Bale slowed down the rate of march and redoubled vigilance, front, rear and flanks. But the crest was unoccupied. The column moved on through, into the broad level area at the top and was mounting a mild slope to a second and final crest, when Lieutenant Haight's arm rose taut above his head in the signal for halt.

The advance guard stood motionless for fully a minute, their rifles slanting in tense readiness in front of them. Then Lieutenant Haight sent a messenger running back to Bale with a request that he move forward alone.

"There's a whole mess of Moros up there, sir," said the messenger. "But their *dato* is coming forward and wants to talk things over the way it looks."

Lieutenant Bale, before going up, made a hurried survey of his terrain. His eye caught a defensive position, fifty yards farther back; one with a fair field of fire to the front and flanks. He detached two sergeants and sent them to lay out the position for possible emergency use, then went forward alone to join his advance guard.

The Moros, armed with *krises, barongs,* muskets of many patterns, fowling pieces and pistols, swarmed under cover of the crest. Bale's eye made a swift calculation of their number and humor, before he addressed himself to the *dato.* There must have been two hundred, their faces greedy for trouble, and in high confidence of their ability to overwhelm the handful of American invaders.

MAJASARI strode forward at Bale's appearance and executed a rather flourishing Spanish salute. The *dato's* whole appearance was in sharp contrast with that of his half naked henchmen. His pantaloons and jacket were blue velvet, set off with innumerable silver buttons. His turban was a bright yellow, decorated with a cluster of large pearls. Bale saw before him anything but the face he had pictured. Majasari was plainly a halfcaste with regular, rather handsome features. His color was that of very dark Spaniard rather than a very light Moro, and his manner was that of a strutting don of the military caste. His eyes alone were Moro; small, cold eyes in which there was a confident glint as he took Bale's measure.

"I regret ver' much, señor," he said in fair English, spoken with Spanish accent, "but I mus' inquire why is it you pass through my *cottas* with muskets and cannon?"

"We are returning from an official visit to his Highness, the Sultan Jamulul," said Bale in a friendly, reserved voice. "We have been careful to keep to the main trail and not enter the villages."

Majasari's white teeth were bared in an insolent smile.

"Ah, señor," he inquired in a half sneer, "why it is you march with the outguards before you? Plees, is it to frighten my children in the *cottas?*"

"We are a detachment of troops," said Bale. "We are traveling through strange country and in the formation customary for such marches. Your sultan made no objection to our arms."

"My sultan!" sneered Majasari. He snapped his fingers spitefully. *"Oiga!* Plees if you spik of the fat pig Jamulul —ah, señor, I have only this to say the filthy *reyezuelo—"*

He spat vindictively and snapped his fingers again.

"That, of course, is a matter between you and the sultan," Bale replied evenly. "Our purpose is to be friendly with all Moros, and I assure you we will go direct to Jolo without causing trouble."

Majasari's face spread in a slow grin until his eyes were all but closed by his cheeks.

"Ver' good, señor" he said. "If you are friends, plees put down your muskets and cannon, which we will deliver to you at Jolo—*mañana."*

"That's rather an unusual request, isn't it, Dato Majasari?" Bale inquired softly, his own face wreathing in a smile that matched the *dato's* mirthful grimace.

"Diantre, señor!" flared Majasari. He indicated his men with an insinuating sweep of his hand. "But if the señor refuse, it is ver' unhappy for señor. I shall order my soldiers to seize your guns!"

Bale did not stiffen at the threat. His face became a placid mask as he stood, apparently debating the situation with himself. When he replied, it was to make a polite request.

"The Señor Dato will no doubt allow me a few minutes in which to explain the situation to my men?" he proposed. "I will send you my answer without delay when I have pointed out to my own soldiers the great numbers you have in your command."

"Sí, señor," Majasari yielded. His face was beaming triumph as he consulted a large gold watch. "Five minutes, señor."

Bale returned to his halted column, followed by Haight and the four men of the advance guard. As he approached he gave a sharp command which headed men and mules back down the trail to the position selected for defense. Three minutes saw his men in position, under cover of a convenient ground welt that paralleled what would be their front in event of battle. The eight artillerymen unpacked guns, carriages and shells and set them ready. A series of yells came from the Moros at these maneuvers, but no firing. Five minutes saw the position ready for action. Bale, arming himself with an extra rifle, took position in the center of his firing line.

A shot rang out from the crest of the hill. A chorus of enraged Moro yells followed. A random fire raked the earth in front of Bale's position, or screeched in the air high overhead.

"Hold your fire, men, until I give the order," Bale cautioned, his voice calm and reassuring. "There's only one way to meet superior numbers—and that's by using superior marksmanship. Make every shot count. It's your one chance of keeping them out of *barong* range. Keep cool and shoot straight when they come!"

Flashes of color showed through the tufts of coarse grass at the upper crest. The air was thick with noise. The pot shooting of Spanish muskets kept up for some time. Bale guessed that the Moros placed small reliance on their ancient muskets. They were gathering force, working themselves into the frenzy of jungle warfare, for the attack with cold steel. Once at the grapple, they would come into their own with their heavy bladed *barongs.*

Bale surveyed the mettle of his men with a rising, excited gratification. They lay prone under cover, faces and muscles tense, eyes dancing with alert readiness. They could not have been more collected in a competition at the target range. Some adjusted their sights, or rubbed specks of dust from bolt, chamber or barrel. Their whole attitude was more that of an orchestra tuning

up for a concert than a platoon setting itself for a desperate fight against heavy odds. The two one-pounders were set at either flank, ready to pump shrapnel.

"All right, men, they've started the rumpus," exclaimed Bale. "It's slightly uphill to the point where they're coming over at us. Corporal Forbes, pick a target and give us the range! You others—hold your fire!"

Forbes, coach in marksmanship, unlocked his bolt, settled down to firing position, sighted with slow deliberation and squeezed the trigger. A Moro half rose from cover and collapsed.

"Three hundred yards, sir, with quite a bit of front sight," reported Forbes. "No windage."

Whether Majasari was set for attack or not, the shot exploded the Moro passion. With a mad yelling, the *dato's* warriors swarmed over and attacked, a motley horde of grimacing Moros, waving *barongs* or lances, a few remembering to fire their muskets.

"Fire at will—commence firing!" cried Bale.

BOLTS swung slowly at first, but surely. Men remembered to aim deliberately and not jerk their triggers. There were few misses. Steady casualties did not check the attack, nor did the savage spurts of the one-pounders. The hot Moslem blood of the Moros was aflame as they bounded forward, shrieking at the top of their lungs, brandishing their weapons furiously. But their savage demonstration, no matter what its value in native warfare, did not shake the venomous accuracy of the Krags.

At two hundred yards Majasari's line was thinning. Bale ordered battle sights. The Moros closed without halt to a hundred yards. Bolts were fed home now with feverish rapidity. The *dato's* losses became unbearable. Majasari knew nothing of minor tactics, how to reenforce his assault with succeeding lines of reserves. Some of the Moros remembered to shoot with their muskets, but without aim. *Barong* fighters, seeing the havoc about them, began bolting to the flanks. Others ran to the rear. At fifty yards the attack had thinned down to a dozen men. Leaping ahead, frenzied with fear and rage, desperate as *juramentadoes,* they succumbed one at a time.

One warrior alone remained on his feet. He came on, zigzagging, twisting, squirming—a difficult target. He bore down to twenty yards as if protected by the Arab charm from Mecca. Bale saw the fanatic's wide heaving nostrils, his stark eyes, the thick cords of his neck, the knotted muscles of his *barong* arm. A few more leaps would have brought him into the line, when Bale, casting aside his Krag, rose to open fire with his heavier .45 at close range. The Moro lunged toward his visible assailant. Three times Bale missed the vaulting figure. The fourth shot took the Moro to his knees, where he groped in a vain effort to rise for a last lunge, then collapsed into the glory of his heaven.

Bale wasted no time in reconnoissance. As the Moro assault spent itself he leaped to the attack. Majasari had not shown himself in the action. Bale guessed that the wily Moro awaited under cover, doubtless with a remnant of his faithful retainers behind the slope.

"Forward—as skirmishers—at two yards interval!" he commanded; and the line moved forward, rifles at the ready.

A scattering musketry sputtered from the crest, but quickly dwindled as the men advanced. A series of short, fast dashes and they were at the crest, their Krags commanding the open country below and in front of them to the slopes of Bud Dajo. Majasari had vanished, his warriors were reduced to cautious skulkers in the distant foliage.

Bale threw his riflemen across the crest and shouted an order to deliver fire on every fleeting target that showed itself. His veins were running hot with fighting blood, with the outrage of those assaults upon his men at

Jolo, Majasari's attempt to overwhelm him with superior force. Majasari had started this fight. The lieutenant swore that he would end it, give the Moros a lesson they would not forget in a hurry. He ordered the one-pounders into action against a *cotta* that lay on their right front at a range of fifteen hundred yards. For half an hour the mountain guns poured bursting shell into the huts and neighboring thickets, while the riflemen picked off every Moro who came within range.

The firing gradually lulled into silence as all signs of the enemy disappeared. Moroland quieted down to the chattering of excited monkeys. Bale rose, stepped out on to the open ridge and stood a full minute, a tempting target. But he drew no fire, evidence enough that Majasari and his band had their fill of the clash for the moment. Bale motioned his men to their feet, ordered them into column and checked them. Not even a minor casualty, thanks to perfect discipline, expert marksmanship and the atrocious musketry of the Moros. But there remained the danger of ambuscade on the trail across Bud Dajo.

Bale pushed ahead at a lively gait. Nearly two hours had been lost, fifteen miles of tangled trail lay ahead into Jolo. If further trouble brewed, there was the danger of delay en route until night fell on the trail. And night in the jungle meant the *dato's* chance for a red revenge. Leaving the head of the column to Haight, Bale took over the advance guard. To his mind the attack upon his men was not at an end until they reached Jolo. Therefore any demonstration of force along the trail, any massing of warriors in the *cottas* along their flanks would be the signal for fire.

They marched with sharp eyes searching out every thicket, their rifles held ready for instant action each time they passed through a ravine or approached an inviting ridge. The small cannons were swung lightly to the mules, the gunners pressing close, ready at a moment's warning to assemble their pieces and put them into action. But Majasari's lust for battle had burned itself out. If his scouts clung to the flanks, they were careful not to expose themselves to sight. The long route across Bud Dajo was uneventful. The column made its way without interference down to the coast and through the peaceful region outside Jolo.

Sight of the walled city looming suddenly before them in the last crimson glow of the sinking sun brought a cheer from the weary men. But the spectacle rose before Bale as an omen, one that flooded his mind with misgiving as his mind was freed of the vigils of the trail. His men were safe. But there was Major Hopper for him to reckon with. His knees sagged at the thought. The night without sleep, the grueling march of forty miles to Maibun and back, the stress of action; these claimed their toll as he led the way through the gates and into Jolo.

What report did Major Hopper have of the clash? Such news traveled fast. There was the danger that the triple spy, Aglima Almi, had come pattering in with a lurid tale of the tempest. Or Majasari might have sent his own Moro agents ahead to charge that they had been ruthlessly attacked by the iron fisted American. The dire possibilities of Major Hopper's ire filled Bale with apprehension. He told himself that he had done the only thing he could do to protect his men, give the audacious Majasari a much needed thrashing. But he could picture Hopper in a towering rage at the reports, fired out of all reason by the picture of Sulu in a maelstrom of Moslem disorder. Hopper would rage that his orders had been disobeyed, the whole policy of moral suasion cast in failure, his own military reputation ruined at Manila.

Bale pulled himself together and marched his men at attention through the garrison to their barracks. Darkness was thickening, the men were at

mess, the streets deserted except for native servants and the occasional sentries on post. He dismissed the men with a terse commendation of their conduct in action and a warning to hold their tongues until he had made official report to headquarters. Then, without pausing for dinner, he headed for headquarters to face the major with his formal report.

THERE was the hope, he reflected, that he would be the first to give the information to his commander. In that event he could break the news gently to the major, set out in detail that he had acted only in self-defense after moral suasion had failed of its own accord. But sight of Aglima Almi coming from the adjutant's office, a sly grin on his oily face, swept away that hope. The grin on the little renegade's face broadened as he passed Bale at the door and slipped away into the night without speaking.

At sight of Bale, the adjutant leaped to his feet and rushed forward, his face flashing a warning. Bale stopped and held his ground, despite Lieutenant Hoyle's excited gesture.

"Get out, Bale," the adjutant warned in a raucous whisper. "Get away and keep away—until I send for you!"

When Bale hesitated, Lieutenant Hoyle caught him by the arm and hustled him outside.

"Nice mess you stirred up out there," he wailed. "We're all sitting on thin ice, and here you come to spoil everything!"

"I have come to make my report," said Bale, grimly resolute. "I have no apologies to offer for my conduct."

"Oh, you haven't, eh?" said Hoyle. "Didn't I tell you there was a chip on your shoulder when you started to Maibun? Hasn't the whole garrison had a chip on its shoulder for weeks? Didn't the Old Man accuse everybody of insubordination—and send you out because he could count on you? Do you expect him to laugh this row off if he hears of it?"

"If he hears of it?" Bale stammered. "Hasn't that little rat—"

"I'm telling you, Bale, my neck's in this noose with yours now," cried Hoyle. He went on rapidly, "When that little renegade spy came in here and told me his story, I tell you I took him in hand. I told him if the major found out, he'd burn every *cotta* in Sulu, and bury him in a grave with the pigs. Lucky thing, when Majasari sent three agents in here two hours ago, they were held at the gate until I passed them in. They wanted to see the major, but I got Aglima to put the scare into them—warn them if they said anything about trouble until we had your report, there'd be the merry hell to pay! They pleaded that they wanted to talk business with the major and would guard their tongues. Well, they've been in there an hour with the major—with Aglima Almi acting as interpreter—and if that little rat doublecrossed me, there'll be blood on my moon!"

"Thanks, Hoyle," said Bale feelingly. "Sorry you took such a chance on my account. But if they've been in there an hour—well, it can only mean they're giving the major their version of the trouble. Don't you think I'd better—"

"I think you'd better make yourself scarce," Hoyle broke in impatiently. "Let me see what the situation looks like when Hopper shows up. That little heathen came out a minute ago—said he was going after the only native in Jolo who can write the lingo. That was all I got out of him. It may mean the doublecross; affidavits—a written statement—anything. Now you wait in your quarters, Bale—and keep away from here until I send for you!"

"I'll make my own official report in writing—immediately, sir," said Bale, and turned on his heel.

At the K Company orderly room he politely refused the first sergeant's offer to bring his dinner and set to work upon his report. The official facts, extended

without reservation in their fullest detail, at least would save him from formal charges, if not from Major Hopper's unofficial wrath. Manila would have no alternative, no matter what Hopper's recommendations. Otherwise no officer would be safe in protecting his men in the jungles.

But Major Hopper's unofficial displeasure was not a thing to be minimized. Bale knew the penalties his commander might exact; and Hopper was the type for petty reprisal should he find himself balked in taking official measures. For one thing the major could ask for the assignment of a captain from Manila to supplant Bale in command of K Company. He could see to it that the disagreeable assignments of duty were centered upon the helpless object of disfavor. And he could write disagreeable reports, casting reflection upon an officer's loyalty and efficiency. A hostile commanding officer would be a new experience for Bale and one for which he had small relish.

Bale was penning the final lines of his report when the door of the orderly room banged open. Hopper stalked into the room, his adjutant at his heels. Bale dropped his pen and sprang to attention at the unexpected visitation, his eyes searching the major's somber face, which was as coldly official as a marble cast.

"How long have you been in the garrison, Lieutenant?" Hopper demanded.

"Something over an hour, sir," Bale replied.

"Why have you not presented yourself at headquarters?"

"I was preparing my official report of the affair, sir," Bale replied, mastering himself against the brewing storm. He leaned over his desk, caught up his pen, signed the document, handed it to the major and added coolly, "That is my account of exactly what happened, sir."

Hopper stuffed the report into his belt without looking at it. His face broke suddenly into an affable smile. Bale's taut lips fell apart, he blinked in the manner of a man who is not sure of his own ears as the major spoke.

"Well, since you didn't show up, I came over to offer my congratulations on your fine work," Hopper boomed. "That was a fine piece of work, Bale, mighty well handled, and I came over to tell you so on my way to dinner."

"Yes, sir," stammered Bale, gaping uncertain belief. Such words sounded incredible coming from Major Hopper. But the suave smile on Hoyle's face bore full confirmation of the major's sincerity. "I used my best judgment, sir."

"Of course, of course!" Hopper beamed. "Just as I contended all along. A little patience and some sound common sense is better than hot lead and cold steel. Just as the English said—buy off the head Mohammedan and the others step right into line. I give that sultan credit for getting mighty fast action, Bale."

"Yes, sir," said Bale, blinking uncertainly for his bearings.

"That rascal Majasari had his emissaries in here two hours ago asking to get on the bandwagon," Hopper went on. "The *dato* sent word he was calling off his dogs. Wants to sign the pact and live in peace. Seemed to be anxious we get the word to you if you were staying out in the jungle." Hopper paused to chuckle and rub his chubby hands. "It's a great victory for us, Bale! A great victory for moral suasion—and not a shot fired!"

Lieutenant Bale recovered his voice as Major Hopper was at the door.

"My report, sir," he exclaimed. "I thought, perhaps—if there's no hurry I'd like to make some alterations, sir—or discuss it with Lieutenant Hoyle to see if it covers what is wanted."

Major Hopper thrust the report back to Bale with a gesture of indifference.

"Don't bother about a formal report, Bale," he rejoined. "Come in some time and tell me in your own way all about the sultan. He must be quite a fellow—and I want to know all about him."

SANCTUARY

By F. ST. MARS

The Jackdaw sat on the Cardinal's chair!
Bishop and abbot and juror were there . . .
—BARHAM

WHEN the jackdaw left home that morning the east was just beginning to tinge with a wan, cold faintness, and the white cliffs to stand out of the general blackness.

Somewhere very far away a thick knee plover was calling with a wail like a lonely soul adrift in eternity, and a short eared owl was howling in a black hollow nearby, like "the wolf on Onalasker's shore."

Beyond these two, nobody seemed to be awake except the waves—who never slept—and the jackdaw, who was one of the early birds, coming of an early race, the crow race, who hatch early in the year (and die early in life, sometimes, for their sins) was alone.

He had all the great, clean, cool, still, sleeping world to himself.

Jack dropped, upon twinkling wings like some spent black projectile, into the "dim, blue goodness of the Weald," where, upon a turreted square church tower, such as the Saxon loved to build, he sat and let himself indulge in what in the bird world is known as a "sunning reaction" in the rising sun glow.

Sitting there, with God's own acre, in its beautiful green peace, spread below him, Jack suddenly became aware of a sound as of one—an old man—sleeping near at claw (one can scarcely say near at hand) and the sleeper snored.

And promptly Jack—whom I do not believe anybody ever found quite asleep—woke up. Even if the everlasting claims of the inner man, or rather the inner bird, had not led him never to drop a chance, his natural inquisitiveness would. He explored, following up the sound, and it led him to the belfry tower.

All dusty, and cobwebby, and glazing sunlight, and cool shadow, in there it was, and still with that perfect silence which is

only known to religious places, woods, mountains, and the sea. And what he saw there was a surprise. It made him draw even himself up very straight and blink with both eyes.

As a wild creature, of course, he had learned the philosophy that one should never be surprised at anything in Nature; still, there is a limit. And the sight that there met his peculiar eyes was enough to try the nerves of any bird.

Two things were sitting there, upon their hams, so to speak, staring at the dusty floor between their feet, and one thing was in front of the other, and very small, half naked, enormous of head and beak, so that the weight thereof seemed more than it could lift; and the other thing was at least three times larger than the smaller, and resembled one gigantic powder puff as much as it resembled anything at all.

Neither of the creatures seemed to have any wings, but both were ugly by any standard of ugliness, and the counterpart of their faces might have been found among the famous devils of Notre Dame, certainly nowhere else upon this earth. And the things were so sleepy that they could not keep awake, but dozed at ten-second intervals, the larger with its head on its breast, the smaller with its heavy head on its beak on the ground: and all the time they snored, wheezily, harshly, most uncannily snored.

Jack had never seen a young owl up to date; the old ones were quite bad enough for him, but young owls varying so greatly in size and age, yet belonging to the same brood, were a thing beyond his comprehension. He could not expect the uncanny owl to do things like other birds, of course, but he did not expect this, and at this time of year.

I think, however, "accidents" had befallen the earlier ventures of the parents of those unearthly ones. However, the jackdaw was a philosopher, as well as an adaptable beggar moving with the times. He had once found—and eaten—a perfectly fresh wood pigeon's egg well on in August, so why not young owls now? Why not, indeed?

After his discovery, Jack sat perfectly still and regarded those monstrosities with narrowed, pale eyes, quizzically, and he looked more like a cunning and wicked old man than ever. As a matter of fact, he was waiting to see if any more nightmares of an unexpected and possibly dangerous nature were hanging back in the dark shadows.

Finding nothing doing, he sidled forward, impelled, I fancy, as much by inquisitiveness and pure mischief as by any real evil intent.

He was met by snores, and something in the way of a surprise.

Both young owls, even the little horror, at once became all fight and snapping threats. The biggest one became more powder puffy than ever. Their whole expression became of the demons demoniacal; while the sounds were the sounds that one slammed, slammed hard with his beak—and he was pretty nifty with his beak, too—as he shifted; but you might as well hammer at an eiderdown quilt as an owl out of temper. His beak simply sunk unyielding into feathers, and he himself all but pitched forward after it.

Then, in the next two seconds and three-quarters, he executed about the most remarkable thing in step dances that has ever been produced to date. He dare not fly, and he could not walk; for hopping there was no time, and anything approaching a straight course was death. The result was a most exciting zig-zag, which ended in a clean drop out of the belfry tower to within fifteen feet of the ground and upside down, where he managed, by some wing trick or other, to right himself, and, rising, fly off to an elm, rook haunted and old, while the old mother owl shrieked maledictions—of the hollow tomb kind—after him.

For a space he went to feed among starlings and cattle in a blue green glebe; but finding it easier to rob the starlings of "leatherjackets," alias cockchafer grubs, which they had dug out, than to dig out grubs of any kind for himself, he was shown, not slowly or gently, off the place

by two big old rookery fathers, who were looking on from the elms.

About noon he turned up at the refuse heap in the vegetable garden of the village almshouses, where a puppy of doubtful age lay awaiting burial. Some fruit in a nearby orchard, however, took his eye better, especially as a buzzard was sailing—but it looked like a mote floating on the eye—almost exactly over that puppy.

Jack fed mightily in the orchard, always managing not to be there, and to leave another bird—a gaudy jay, say, or a greenfinch of gold, a sequin-trimmed starling, or a jet blackbird in his place when a man with a gun came around.

After that Jack returned to where:

> Broad and bare to the skies
> The great Down country lies,
> Green in the glance of the sun,
> Fresh with the keen salt air . . .

and here, upon a sheep walk, fell in with a skirmishing squadron of his fellows.

There was trouble among that company, however, so that they could not help talking about it in their sharp, querulous way; and as he approached—being the looker-on who saw most of the game—he tumbled to the reason. Otherwise he might have tumbled literally to the reason.

Certain portions of a sheep had miraculously placed themselves right out upon the open Down, just where every bird could see them, but also within gunshot of a patch of furze, so full of golden blossom that the eyes were dazzled.

Sheep, when dead, do not decant their parts in convenient places for the wild folk, as a rule, Jack knew: only there seemed to be no danger, and absolutely no reason why a wild folk should not make use of the phenomenon.

Then he saw!

Three ravens, black as unforgiving sin, sat motionless upon three white lumps of chalk, out of gunshot: two buzzards, like slightly dwarfed eagles, floated in the gauze draped blue dome of heaven: and two carrion crows perched in an untidy heap upon a neighbouring hill—waiting and watching, all.

And the iron of a boot heel, lying among the aforementioned furze, flashed in the sun to Jack's eye, even as he warily approached. He could see it; the others could not. The ravens, however, apparently smelled it. At least, since it was hidden from them, I don't see how else they knew enough to keep out of gunshot in spite of the temptation of such a feed.

THE POSITION was this. The ravens were waiting for the jackdaws to go and get shot—for the man who owned the heel in the furze probably had a gun—or, if there was no risk, the ravens waited for jackdaw and buzzard to prove it, then to rob them of their meat. The carrion crows waited pessimistically upon all the lot.

Jack shot over at full speed, his wings twinkling, all burnished and shining black with purple reflections in the sun, shouting warning to his fellows at the top of his sharp voice. It was unwise to draw public attention to himself, also unwise to meddle, but he simply had to meddle, being a jackdaw.

But what happened was extraordinary.

Till then everything seemed to have been in suspension, waiting.

Jack's high, rancorous, "Jack! Jack! Jack-orr, Jack-orr!" seemed to break the spell, and everything got a move on, jumped to action at once. It was almost as if he had touched a spring and made the figure work. Also it was highly disconcerting.

So far as Jack, going like the wind, could see, three things happened instantly and almost simultaneously.

One of the ravens, taking his hint, shifted its position to a riven hawthorn stump a little farther off, and instantly let out a vile scream and fell into viler contortions. It had been caught in a trap set upon the stump, and was hanging and flapping horribly upside down.

The two carrion crows made to shift to a safer spot, passing over the furze, and were met by a splash of less innocent flame among the flaming gorse, and an

appalling thick report, and only one of them flew away. The other fell headlong, and head first.

And finally there was a hiss that was almost a scream, in the air above Jack. His loud alarm notes had attracted it there. He did not know what it was, or wait to look. He did the tumbler pigeon act sidewise, so instantly that one wondered how it was possible, and he let a peregrine falcon, wings shut, spurs outaiming, head drawn in, rigid as a steel wedge, go plunging down by him, with—well, it almost brushed him, so that's how much there was to spare.

Jack's removal from that accursed spot was a revelation to those who think that jackdaws are not quick flyers. He executed one straight, strenuous, straining streak to the white sea cliffs. They were only just the other side of the top of the hill. He did not, however, so much go as be gone, hoping against hope, every terrified inch of the way, that that high born peregrine falcon would live up to his reputation and disdain to strike twice at the prey he had once missed; for Jack knew, as they all do in the wild, that you may, by great good luck, escape the lightning swoop of the princely peregrine falcon once; you are not in the least likely to do so twice.

Jack nearly turned a somersault over the top of the clean, fresh white chalk cliffs, and on to a ledge, where he crouched, panting. Four seconds later, the rest of the jackdaws shot over the brink and did likewise.

But Jack had not yet done with death.

Half an hour later the great big, pirate-rigged, fierce eyed, spotless herring gulls, who had gradually been showing a more and more disconcerting interest in these palpitating, frightened jackdaws, attacked him. They sidled up along the ledge at him. They wheeled by, screaming their wild, ringing "He-oh!" They thought he was wounded.

Wounded, was he, begorrah! He shot from his ledge, and he hit the nearest herring gull full in the chest with his beak—a pretty stroke. The gull wheeled away with a surprised scream. Jack dodged another, sweeping up and noting out of the tail of his eye that his companions were putting up an equally slick fight of it—and—

Oh, beaks and wing coverts!

It was as if the sun had been put out. An immense, beautiful, but terrible, black and white shape, armed to the teeth, heaved, gliding majestically, directly over him, seeming to take the wind from his sails as he flew. It was perhaps six feet from tip to tip of its outstretched narrow vans, and it looked more. But Jack had no need to so look. He knew that superb majesty of flight, that mighty shadow. Only one could make it, the great black-back gull, the king of all the gulls, the master pirate and terror of the seashores.

Jack and his companions zig-zagged, dodging through that crowd like hares through a pack of hounds, and fled Downwards. The gulls did not follow them far beyond the cliffs' edge, for inland was not their realm, and, once having convinced themselves that the daws were only frightened and not wounded, did not hustle them further.

Salt air, however, and hot sun—the sun of the Downs is the most wonderful in all the Kingdom—together are conducive to thirst, and the jackdaws trailed, therefore, in a long black line, to:

> The dew pond on the heights,
> Unfed, that never fails.

And here, in a circular basin on a Down ridge, at a circular pond of limpid water, they sipped their dainty birdsips, and hustled the fairy-like, white rumped, flitting wheatears around.

Wheatears are good to eat, and the shepherds had set so large a number of traps in that place—for wheatears love a dew pond—that the sides of it looked like tiers of seats round an amphitheater, each trap being merely a noose, set beneath a clod of soil on end.

Jack, who must have been at this game before, having hunted a luckless, flitting little wheatear into a trap, was taking some pains to lug it out again, for his,

not the wheatear's, benefit, when three monstrous birds descended upon them with a rush.

Jack had just time to fling himself to one side over the top of a trap, and instantly spring on wing, to avoid the clutching talons of one of the giants, and to hear the agonized yell of one of his pals who had not time to escape. Then he and his friends fled over the ridge, noisily and as fast as they could go, leaving the place in the hands of three honey buzzards, the great hawks, like lesser eagles, they had seen earlier in the day.

As they fled, something went "S-s-sss-swish!" from heaven to earth, clean, smack, bang through the flock. That it had missed striking and utterly blasting the life out of one of them in its abysmal plunge was a miracle, and the jackdaws knew it. Neither Jack nor they expected two miracles, so when they looked and saw that the doom bolt had now taken shape, checked speed, and was rising, and that it was a hobby falcon—bound south, to Spain most like—they hugged the ground, well knowing that no falcon dare launch its headlong stoop at them there.

But this last close call was too much for Jack's nerves. Hunted and harassed everywhere upon the great heaving, lonely Downs, he longed for a sanctuary, some place wherein he could rest and be still—a sanctuary such as he had never in all his life known. And suddenly a thought struck him.

Turning instantly from the Downs, Jack shot swiftly down the great northern slope that drops almost sheer to the Weald. He dare not lift more than a few feet from the ground because the hobby falcon was above them again, circling superbly, and the hobby is the fastest of all the birds, so Jack had to take his chance of what lay in front.

Jack however, knew where he was going, which was more than the other jackdaws did, who knew not where to go, and were glad enough to follow any lead. If they stopped, the falcon would simply come down and select his "kill" at his leisure; that they knew.

Down over the highest fields, where the black oxen were plodding in front of the silvered plough, and the rooks fled in every direction before them. Down over the higher pastures, Jack hurtled, always close to the ground, the falcon always whirling along high overhead. Down to the smaller meadows, down to the fat, smooth pastures. Down to the village—the falcon had lost patience, and was dropping to hunt them as a terrier hunts rabbits—and on to the church tower!

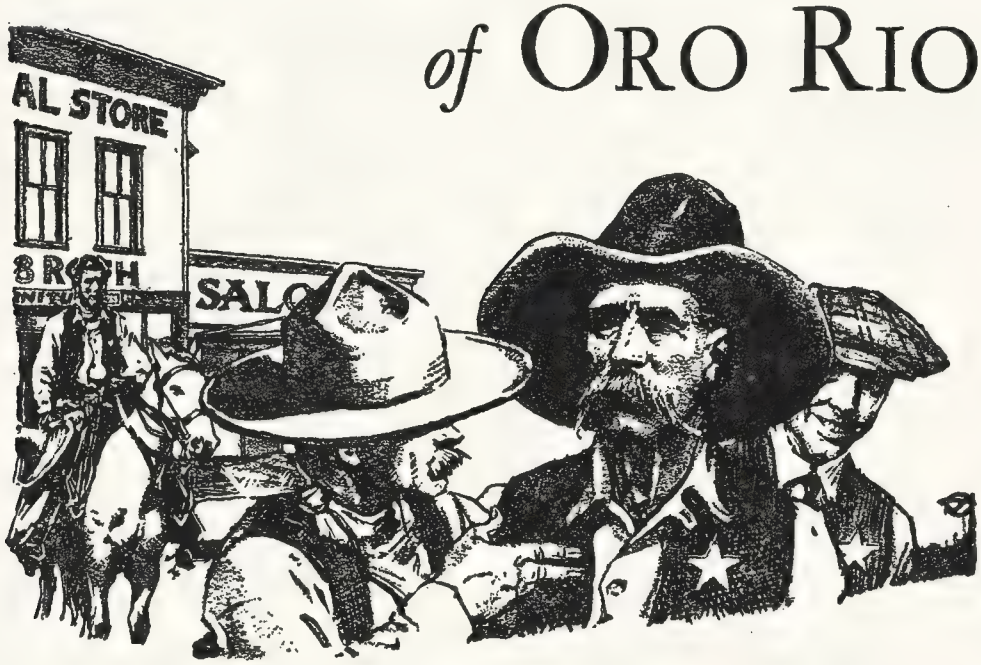
At the sight of the blue smoke curling from the village chimneys, at the sound of the children at play, and a girl's voice singing in that high pitched, Basque-like sing-song peculiar to Sussex natives, the swift, strenuous, fierce little falcon swerved off, and the daw company flung themselves down upon the silent old gray church tower, as a nearly exhausted swimmer flings himself upon a raft.

No sound but the sounds of peace broke the stillness there, and it was as if an angel invisible had stood up at the old church gate and waved the slayer off. Nature herself seemed to move about with one finger upon her lips in this magic acre, and to be whispering "Hush!" Even the clamor of the irrepressible, excitable, monkish jackdaws, way up upon the tower, seemed subdued and reverential.

Yes, it was sanctuary, sanctuary at last. And they realized it, those quick-witted, mischievous, mannikin-like little jackdaws, with their gray monk's cowls, and their strange, sharp, unforgetable, knowing eyes, they realized it.

Jack and his companions never went very far away from the church tower after that. They knew the value of sanctuary, and were always within a sharp, ringing flight of it. In other words, they had solved the problem of the wild, of how to make use of man and where, and when, to avoid him. The others, the ravens and the crows, the buzzards and the falcons, never solved that problem, never adapted themselves, and that is why, today, you will find jackdaws still common upon the Downs, while the others, raven, crow, buzzard and falcon are only a memory.

The MARSHAL *of* ORO RIO



A Story of the Old West

By FREDERICK J. JACKSON

THE whole trouble between the town of Oro Rio and Tom Springer was a matter of growth. Oro Rio kept growing, and Fish Farley kept growing—but Springer didn't. That's the way I look at it, at least; and an old man like myself, even if he is a horse doctor, notices those things more than other folks, I imagine.

A town has always seemed to me like something you wear. It's got to fit you, and you've got to fit it. If you don't grow at the same rate, you'll bust out at the elbows or rattle around inside like popcorn in a hot popper. You just naturally won't feel comfortable, and it's a good bet that the town won't either.

When that happens, something is going to bust loose. The growing pains of a town, like those of a youngster, may be something to laugh at forty years after, but they aren't a bit funny to one that's going through 'em.

It was back in 1885, just after finishing my veterinary course, that I came to Oro Rio, looking for an opening.

Oro Rio wasn't much in those days. All that kept it alive were the siding and shipping pens on the railroad. There were seven big beef outfits within forty or fifty miles, and nesters kept coming in and locating here and there inside that circle.

Folks would drive in fifty miles to get

wagonloads of grub, because there were two stores here and competition made prices cheaper than they were in a one-store town. Besides the two stores we had six saloons, some of them combined with gambling houses and dance halls. It was a wide open layout—what there was of it. And the ranch outfits, when they hit town, helped to pry it just a bit wider.

The Box-Bar-C used to carry about thirty-eight men on its payroll through the Winter. That outfit's range was as big as the State of Rhode Island. The usual percentage of men from Box-Bar-C, and from other outfits, came into town from time to time, got a few drinks in them and went on the prod. That's what made Oro Rio tough. If we'd had paved streets in those days they'd have torn up the pavement just to be playful. What I mean is they played rough.

As a town, we weren't organized much. We had to have a peace officer of sorts, so we just sort of informally elected Roaring Tom Springer as marshal. Everybody chipped in to make up the twenty dollars a month that was his salary. And this twenty bucks was the only town tax that we paid.

Springer was a blacksmith and worked at it in that old shed you can see up the street. He owned a few horses and a couple of buggies and used to rent them out. Finally he worked up that end of the business until he built the big barn that was his livery stable. He also built a strong little room in one corner of the barn, and this room was the town jail.

Springer was a big man, over six feet and weighing more than two hundred pounds. He was as light on his feet as a cat, and when it came to fighting he was plenty rough and tough. He had to be. He was a fast gunman, too; carried a Colt—but didn't use it much.

His usual method when some cowpoke full of liquor was disturbing the peace was to get right in close and talk to the man. He was danged nice about it; he would try to persuade the riotous one to remember that he was in town and ought to act decent.

Most cowboys wanted to be decent. You'd be surprised at how many of them would respond to Springer's nice line of talk:

"Now, pardner," Springer would say, soft as silk, "I want you to help me out. I've got a danged tough job on my hands, gentlin' the boys who can't hold their liquor. I can see that you can hold it fine, but there's some of these cock-eyed citizens who don't agree with me. I had quite an argument with them about it. You're not goin' to put me in wrong, are you?"

It generally worked; but there was a small percentage of the boys who didn't swallow that line of salve at all. Some of them just didn't like Springer, and they'd show fight.

If they did, it was simply too bad—what with Springer standing in close, as he generally did. He would use his fist—once, quick as a wink. Then he'd pick up his man, like a sack, throw him over his shoulder and carry him off to the lockup. The barkeeps always backed his play, sometimes with shotguns, if friends of the lad on the prod threatened to get too rough.

When Springer simply had to shoot a man, which he did once or twice, he was danged polite about it. He didn't shoot to kill. I fixed up the arm of one of the lads, myself. Another puncher, however, we had to take over to the county seat on a mattress in a spring wagon, so that a regular doctor could take care of him. This same gent came back later and bought Springer a drink; that's how he felt about it. And he was darned careful about his liquor, thereafter.

That was Roaring Tom Springer up to about 1887. He was a mighty good peace officer.

But along about '87 or '88, he began accepting too many invitations to "Have one with me." Before that, he was merely a good sociable drinker—two or three every night, just to be regular. But it kept growing until he was hoist-

ing a dozen or more.

At that, even a dozen drinks didn't affect him visibly. He was a big man, cool headed, and could hold his liquor. But he began to *like* the stuff, and finally it got him.

THERE came a night when he accepted too many invitations. Right out of a clear sky, so to speak, he took a dislike to a harmless little shrimp of a dude drummer. This drummer had been showing his samples to the storekeepers and had to stay in town all night before he could catch a train out. He came into a saloon, bought a drink for the few of us who were there, acted like a gentleman and was still acting like one when Springer came in.

"Howdy, gents," says Springer. Then he sees the drummer, who was wearing a hard hat—a fancy cream colored one. "My gosh!" he says. "Who'd believe it!"

He walked over to the drummer, knocked off the hat and then stamped on it till it was plumb ruined.

"I don't like them kind of hats," Springer explains. "And I don't like *hombres* what wears 'em, either."

With that he cuffs the drummer alongside the head with his open hand, knocking him clear off his feet. Springer then steps forward, picks him up, throws him across his shoulder and carries him off to the lockup.

The drummer misses his train the next morning, because he stays locked up till Springer gets over his drunk and remembers to turn him loose.

"I'm lettin' you go now," says Springer, "but this will be a warnin' to you. You can't get drunk and disorderly in Oro Rio."

"But I wasn't," squeaks the drummer, appealing to the rest of us for support.

"Don't talk back to me!" snaps Springer.

Well, what was the use? The drummer swallows kinda hard a couple of times, then shrugs his shoulders and walks over to Sing Lee's restaurant to get his breakfast.

He had to stay in town all day, but he sure kept out of Springer's sight. He probably thought that Springer was crazy—and nobody could blame him.

Some of us talked to Springer, friendly-like, after that, and told him he wasn't quite himself when he got too many drinks in him. He believed us and limited his drinking for quite a spell. But he didn't stick with it. He got to celebrating something or other one night, a little later, and ended his celebration by killing a man.

It was plumb unnecessary, this killing. The man was on the prod, all right, but if Springer had been sober he could have handled him peaceable-like, or at best with a slug in the arm or shoulder. As it was he shot the man in the stomach, which was plumb fatal.

However, the lad had his own gun out and was telling Springer where to head in, at the time it happened; so we had to admit that, in a manner of speaking, Springer had a right to bump him off. A man's simply got no business at all threatening a peace officer with a gun, unless he's ready to take what he gets. Anyhow, the deceased was a stranger that nobody knew, so there wasn't any hollering about his demise. We buried him and let it go at that.

Maybe you're wondering where this Fish Farley I mentioned comes into this yarn. Yes, I mean *the* Mr. Farley—the man with his name on that office up the street, who's head of about everything in Oro Rio from the county commission to the Hot Springs Hotel Company, with the title of mayor and justice of the peace thrown in for good measure.

Well, he enters—plenty. So be patient. I've got to tell this right; I've got to draw you a picture of just how things was when he did enter, or you wouldn't appreciate him.

Now remember that this stranger that Springer bumped off was a small man—maybe five feet four or five, and

skinny in the bargain. Why a big *hombre* like Springer, who is generally a square shooter in the bargain, always picks on small men is something it takes us another year to figure out. He seems to have one of these here complexes. And this complex is only in evidence when he gets too many drinks under his belt.

Give him a few drinks, and he'd go out of his way to cuff and slap a runt. The smaller they were, the more contempt he'd have for them. And as he got drunk oftener and oftener, it began to be a problem. Oro Rio was growing, and it would hardly do to put up a sign at the depot for all small men to stay out. Little guys spent just as much money as big ones, and sometimes they were a danged sight better citizens.

Springer wasn't always drunk, of course. When he was sober, they didn't come better. He put in from six to eight hours a day taking care of his blacksmithing and his livery stable. It was at night that he'd pin on his badge, holster his gun and make the rounds of the saloons. After all, there was only twenty a month in it for him; he must have kept on the job just because he liked it.

Well, progress came marching along, as I say, and a whole wave of it presently hit the town. It came easy, though, and we didn't recognize it at first.

There was a salesman peddling cream separators who spent about a week traveling by rig in and out of town—and he never made a sale. This was strictly beef country, then—not dairy land. About the only folks who ever milked a cow were the nesters.

But it took this little salesman—yes, he was a runt too—quite awhile to find out all this. He was a smart little feller, even if he did wear a size thirteen collar. I know the size of collar he wore, because I was the man who picked it up after Springer got through manhandling him. For Springer was tight again—and finished as usual by throwing this guy in the lockup.

He didn't like it a bit. I was down by the tracks when he took the train out of town. In fact, most of us were there, including Springer. This salesman waited until the train was starting; then he leaned out of an open window and pointed his finger at Springer.

"You big skunk!" he yells. "One of these days you'll be packed in a tripe barrel by mistake. I'm gonna make this town too big to hold you. Get that? Too *big!*"

There was a lot more, but the train was too far away by that time for us to hear it.

It was a funny threat, and no mistake. Most threats ran just the opposite; they'd make a town too small to hold somebody. But too big—it was a puzzler.

WELL, here is where Mr. Farley comes in. It was, in fact, about a week after the separator salesman left that young Farley arrived on the train. He too was a runt for size and kinda frail looking. You could tell at a glance that he'd been sick.

The first thing he inquired about was the hot springs; he said a friend of his had spoke of them. He thought maybe by drinking the water he could get back his health.

Look over there. You see that slick hotel? Well, that's where the hot springs are. But the hotel wasn't there when Farley arrived; only a few tents, occupied by folks we looked on as a bunch of nuts. Who'd be wanting to drink stinking water, we used to ask ourselves, with good whisky being served at every bar in town? But when folks are sick, we argued, they're liable to do anything; so we let them alone.

Farley had brought a tent with him and a cot. That was about all he had, too. He figured that he could get some kind of a job to pay expenses. But he figured wrong. You know how things are in a small town. The young boys

who were born here had a habit of growing up, and there weren't enough jobs to take care of them, unless they went out on the cattle ranches. And Farley couldn't even ride a horse.

He was in a bad jam, but he didn't cry about it. He had a slick, folding fishing rod with him and some fancy gadgets that had worked fine, he said to fool fish in other parts of the country. So he set out to catch fish to eat. It was the first time he'd ever fished because he had to, he let out. Before his father had died, forcing him to quit college, he'd always fished for the fun of it.

He came into the stable late one afternoon, while I was hanging around there, carrying his rod and a big fish basket hung over one shoulder.

"Doc," he says, "would you like to have a few trout for supper?"

"Sure," says I, thinking maybe I'd get a half dozen trout about six, seven inches long, which was the usual kind us towners caught when we went fishing.

He opens the cover of his basket and starts plopping down some trout that are fourteen and fifteen inches long, and more.

"Hey, stop!" I yelps. "One or two of them is more than a mess for me. Where in hell did you get them?"

"Why, out of the river," says he, innocent enough.

And he was innocent, too. How was he to know that, using a new kind of lure, he had caught trout bigger'n us town folks ever dreamed of?

"How many you got?" I asks.

"About twenty or so," says he.

"And what you gonna do with 'em?" says I.

"Eat some," he replies, " and give the rest around to folks who have been friendly to me."

"Which, I presume," says I, with a chuckle, "doesn't include Roaring Tom Springer."

"No, he says, quietly, "it doesn't include Tom Springer; not unless he'll sprinkle 'em generously with potassium cyanide before he eats them."

From which little remark you can see that Springer hadn't varied much in his rule regarding little men in his attitude toward Farley. Fact is, the third night Farley is in town Springer hops on to him, just as he has others, grabs him by the coat lapel, rips his clothes half to tatters and shoves him in the jug. If we hadn't interfered, after that, Farley would probably have had to leave town. But we liked him and told Springer, flat, to leave the kid alone.

"You need money, don't you?" I ask Farley.

He looks at me, level eyed for a moment, then grins.

"Yes, but what of it?"

"Plenty," says I. "You've got money in that basket and don't know it. Come along; we're going to pay a visit to old Sing Lee."

Now this Sing Lee was a chink who dished up the best cooking in town. He was a business man, too. He takes one look at those fish; then he says—

"How muchee?"

"Two-bits apiece," says I. "And there's more where they come from."

It was a sale. Fresh trout was on Sing Lee's bill-of-fare the next morning. Fresh trout, at four-bits a copy, dangled in front of a lot of hungry folks who were sick and tired of tough beef, killed one morning and served the next. Sa-ay! Sing Lee couldn't serve 'em up fast enough. Farley couldn't catch 'em fast enough, either, even if he was a danged good fisherman. No more being broke for young Fish Farley. Yes, we called him Fish Farley after that.

Not long after Farley got going good in the trout supply business, we began to hear again from the separator salesman—only at first we didn't know it.

THERE was some 80,000 or 100,000 acres of marsh just south of the river. The only deeded land in the fifteen mile strip along the river belonged to the railroad company. It had got its title from

the Government, when the rails were laid. The railroad company was glad to sell out its eight sections—some five thousand acres—dirt cheap.

When we heard of the sale's being recorded at the county seat most of us laughed. Our pet joke was that maybe somebody was going to start a frog farm —frogs or ducks. Or else some one was plumb crazy.

Then wires were pulled at Washington to have the Government put up the rest of the marsh land for sale at public auction. Some big company was the only bidder. Even at $1.25 an acre it took a flock of cash money to buy in all that land.

We sure were puzzled by this time. But when we found out that the cash had been advanced by a big cream separator company in Sweden, and that the salesman whom Tom Springer had once kicked out of town was behind it all, we began to scratch our heads.

Flat cars loaded with machinery began to arrive at the Oro Rio siding. Then came day coaches—dozens of them —filled with husky Swedes from Minnesota and Wisconsin. Progress had hit us —and no mistake.

These Swedes didn't stay idle. They started throwing up a dike along the river. They had a big camp to live in; and as they kept building the dike and digging ditches, they'd move this camp to keep pace.

A lot of their supplies were bought wholesale, in Minneapolis; but it helped the town more or less anyway. Especially Tom Springer. Springer had horses to rent and he made plenty of money off them. Box-Bar-C got the contract to supply prime fat beef—how those Swedes did eat!—and the saloons, of course, did a thriving business; Swedes like their liquor.

Also, Swedes would rather fight than eat or drink. Tuck a few jolts of raw red-eye into them, and they'd become very tough indeed. But none of them packed guns. They fought with their fists and boots, for the sheer fun of it.

I'll say this for Springer, he met them on even terms. He'd take off his gunbelt and flop it across the bar for the barkeep to take care of every time he went into action, which was often enough.

Each payday they'd bring up a new champion to fight him. He licked every danged one of them; but he knew he'd been in a fight by the time he was through.

Farley got along fine with the Swedes. He was an educated young feller, like I said, and pretty soon he began to pick up their language. He said it wasn't harder to learn than German, and he'd caught on to that easy at college.

Farley had been doing pretty good with his fishing. Five or six dollars a day, for a chap who doesn't drink and saves his money, soon counts up. His health was good, too. The fishing had done it—that and the hot springs.

Soon after the Swedes arrived Farley bought these springs. The homesteader charged him five dollars an acre, for the forty, and thought he was stinging him. If he's still alive, I wonder what that homesteader thinks today!

Everybody, you see, was rolling along on the wave of prosperity. That includes the separator salesman. Those whirling cream separators had been invented in Sweden along about 1880. Ten years after, they were being imported wholesale into the United States. They sold like hotcakes in the Middle West.

This salesman, however, sure drew a blank when they gave him the far Western territory. On the map it was set down as "cow country". How was he to know that, to the Westerner, cows meant *beef* cattle? Dairies? Nobody had ever even thought of them, out Oro Rio way.

There wasn't a creamery inside a day's travel by train. Sing Lee and the stores bought butter that was sent in clear from Kansas.

But this salesman was nobody's fool. He was now behind the company that was reclaiming all this marsh land and

turning it into dairy pastures. They built a bridge across the river and good roads through land that had once been only a marsh. And they sold it in eighty-acre tracts at prices per acre that made us blink.

Even then, these prices were one-third of what good dairy land was bringing back in Iowa and Illinois. And any man who could milk a cow and was willing to work like hell could get backing from the company, if he lacked money. It was the chance of a lifetime for the Swede and Dane farmhands. They jumped at it.

But with every tract that was sold went a contract for one of these Swedish separators and an agreement to sell all the cream to the company. That big yellow building over across the river is the creamery; it wasn't so big in those days, but it did plenty of business.

Did Oro Rio grow? Man, how could it *keep* from growing? And with this growth came the growing pains, which I was talking about—and lots of trouble for Mr. Roaring Tom Springer.

FOR a long while we had got along with practically no law at all, you might say. No justice of the peace, no anything—excepting Springer. He interpreted the law and enforced it as he saw fit. A night in jail took care of most cases. When it was something really serious, the lawbreakers would be shunted up to the county seat. We seldom bothered the county officials with our petty troubles, and they didn't bother us. But that couldn't last. The town was getting too big, and especially too big for Tom Springer.

There was a shakeup at the county seat, and one day a combined deputy assessor and tax collector blew in. He was a man who took himself seriously. He asked questions and sized up property. Among others, he looked over Springer's buildings, teams, wagons and rigs. When he was done, he told Springer that he was assessed so much.

Springer blew up. The idea of him having to pay taxes! Why, say, he ran the town. Who did this man think he was, anyhow? And besides, the assessment was five times what it ought to be.

But the county man would not lower his figure, and he went away leaving Springer in a fine mood indeed. He had been sober for a couple of months —Springer, I mean—but now he went out and blotted up a lot of liquor.

The assessor hadn't left town yet, and a couple of hours later Springer ran into him again. It was just too bad for the official. He wasn't a big man, anyway. When Springer let him out of the jail the next morning, he hurried back to the county seat, sporting two black eyes, a bruised nose and a sense of burning indignation.

Without even stopping to change his coat—off which the lapels had been torn during the fracas—he must have called a meeting of the county board of commissioners. We didn't hear what he told them, but it undoubtedly was enough. The next thing we knew, announcement was made that conditions in Oro Rio were nothing less than awful, and that a special election would be called at once to elect proper peace officials.

When that news reached town, Springer began drinking seriously. We thought we had seen him drunk before, but it appeared that up to then we never really had appreciated how much red liquor Tom Springer could imbibe and still stay on his feet.

Along about dark the foreman of the creamery drops into the saloon in which Springer is holding forth.

"Say, you," Springer yelps, "how much do you think I oughta be asheshed?"

"Why, I'm sure I don't know," replies this Swede, who really is a smart and affable fellow.

"You don't, huh!" says Springer. "Well, that's the wrong answer. It shows you're in with thesh c'rupt pol'tishans what's suckin' our life blood. Jail is the plashe for you!"

He reaches out for his favorite hold —the coat lapel—and he reaches quick and rough. But the Swede is even quicker and rougher. That coat lapel goes back a few inches and Springer's hand closes on nothing. At the same moment the Swede draws back his arm and lets him have it—his right fist, right on the nose. You could have heard the smack a block away, just like slapping a wet plank with a shingle.

And then the Swede is gone out of the door, before any of us really knew what had happened. It was a strategic retreat and a wise one. A sober man without a gun has no business staying in the same room with a drunk officer who carries a Colt.

Springer was furious—and dangerous. He staggered around for a minute, shaking his head to clear it, and then began looking for that Swede. He couldn't find him, of course. So he came back to the bar and had another drink.

The next moment he discovered that his nose was bleeding. So far's I know, in all his fights he had never been busted on the nose before. He bled plenty, and pretty soon he began to get scared. He thought he would bleed to death. The tears began running down his red cheeks; he begged me to save him.

Now I'm not a regular doctor, but I knew that Tom Springer was so full-blooded that, figuratively, he could bleed a week and be healthier for it. I told him so, but he continued to blubber.

The barkeep gave him a piece of ice. He applied that, in a handkerchief, and finally the bleeding stopped. But every time he took a look at his busted nose in the mirror he'd order another drink. Bimeby he allows he'll go out and look again for that Swede. He wanted to know where the man lived, but we'd all forgotten.

"It's this way," I told him. "Sometimes he lives one place and sometimes another. He just sorta boards around."

"Sounds reasonable, Doc," says Springer. "A *hombre* like that probably doesn't pay his bills and *has* to move."

Just then in comes a chap named Bill Forrest.

"What's happened to your nose?" he asks Springer.

"A danged Swede busted it," says Springer. "I'm goin' out and kill him."

"Arrest him, you mean, don't you?" says Bill.

"It's all the same," Springer insists. "If I don't kill him he'll wish I had."

This Bill Forrest tries to talk Springer out of the idea. He sees a lot of trouble if Roaring Tom goes across the bridge into Swede territory.

"You've got no authority over there," he says.

"Authority, hell!" says Springer. "I've got a star, ain't I? Somebody tried to tell me the sheriff said I was no longer a depity, but, by damn, I'm a depity until they take this star away from me. And they'll have one hell of a time doin' that."

"But you haven't even a warrant," argues Bill.

"I don't need no warrant," Springer growls. "I'm the law in these parts—the law! But lesh have a drink."

Well, they had the drink. And while he is downing his, an idea hits Springer.

"Lissen," he says to Bill, "how much d'you think I oughta been asheshed?"

Bill laughs.

"About twice what they did assess you, I'd say," he answers. "I'm not half so well off as you, but I got soaked just as much as you did."

Springer doesn't see any logic to such an argument.

"Thash got nothin' to do with it, Bill. You're no friend of mine. You're in with those c'rupt pol'tishans what's suckin' our life blood. And you're drunk, too. You can't hold your liquor. Ash a friend of yours, Bill, I'm gonna lock you up, sho'sh you can study the error of your waysh."

Forrest went with him peacefully. With Springer full of booze, there was no use arguing. Springer was almost tearful as he shoved him into the jail and turned the key.

"I hate to do it, Bill," he says, "but as an offisher of the law it's my duty."

Then, with several of us following at a respectful distance, he starts up the street again. The first gent he meets is the station agent. He asks him about the assessment, gets the wrong answer; and presently the agent is in jail, too.

A couple of bewildered Swedes, who had come into town merely to get more liquor for a birthday party, were his next victims. And Jim Hall, on his way home after closing up his general store, wound up in the jug along with several others.

All in all, it was a crazy night. Before twelve o'clock there's eighteen men in the little jail. It was hot and stuffy. The Black Hole of Calcutta had nothing on what they suffered. I came near to joining them; but by this time I knew the right answer to Springer's question.

I assured him that the assessor was a robber; that he should have been taxed about one-fifth of the sum named; and that I'd join him in shooting up the county seat the next time we went up there.

Springer wept on my shoulder and bought me a drink.

WELL, that night's work put the kibosh on Tom Springer. Those eighteen gents in the jail occupied all their time while there in talking politics. There wasn't any of them that might properly be called a Prohibitionist; but they all agreed on one point: Oro Rio needed a new marshal, and he had to be a man that didn't drink.

Now that might sound easy, but it wasn't. They couldn't think up even one teetotaler who was old enough, or had guts enough, to make a good peace officer. And, as a matter of fact, they needed two men, because the county had called an election for both a constable and a marshal to boot. Springer was a candidate for both offices. He thought he would win easy. If he got beat, the hardest job of his opponent would be to handle him. That was going to take plenty of nerve.

Well, it simmered down to the fact that the only teetotaler in town with any brains at all was young Farley. They all liked Farley; but he was a little chap, weighing maybe a hundred and twenty pounds dipped in molasses, and his nerve was an unknown quantity—his physical nerve, I mean.

They talked him over, pro and con, and finally decided to give him a chance —if he had the nerve to run against Springer.

Bill Forrest was spokesman of the committee that was sent to interview him. To their surprise, Farley was not at all averse to the idea.

"The future of the trout selling business," he says, "now seems to be all in the past. I've fished out the stream, of big ones, anyhow, and I'm looking around for an opening. But I kinda thought I'd prefer to run for justice of the peace. I've had two years of law study you know."

"We got our candidate picked for that job, son," says Bill. "All we've got open is this one I mention; and it'll be tough, too. Springer ain't goin' to like it a bit, if you beat him."

"I'm not worried about Springer," Farley retorts. "I'll have the law behind me. I'll handle him if I have to deputize ninety per cent. of the folks in Oro Rio to do it."

That speech made a hit with Bill and his crowd. It showed that Farley wasn't scared of anybody—not even Springer. And that was all they wanted to know. To be sure, he was a little runt; but then —you never can tell about little guys, as Forrest himself admitted.

Farley didn't do any electioneering. That was all attended to by the eighteen gents who had been locked up that night in the jail. On election day, Farley wasn't even in town. He went fishing.

Along toward the middle of the afternoon he came into Sing Lee's with some trout to sell. They weren't big ones; he'd long since fished them out.

Sing Lee smiled blandly and shook his head.

"Too small hook," he says. "Thas tlouble with fish these days. I fixum."

He trotted into his backroom and returned with a hook that looked like it might have been made for tuna, or safe hoisting. Farley looked at it and grinned. He said that it was ten sizes too big, and that he never used a bait hook, anyway.

"N'mind," insisted Sing Lee. "You use-um big hook catch big fish. Mebbe lizahd do for bait, not?"

There was no use arguing with Sing Lee when he set his mind on anything. We all knew that. Farley grinned good naturedly as the chink lifted his coat lapel and fixed the hook firmly to the underside. He pulled the hook through the folds of cloth, brought the point back and jerked it until it lay flat behind the lapel.

"There," he says, giving it a final pat. "Next time you fish you not flogettin' big hook. Lots of big fish left. Sing Lee know."

Well, Farley got elected. And when Springer was told of the results, he started drinking. That was at sundown. By eight o'clock he was drunk—fighting drunk. He didn't just plain disturb the peace; he did his dangdest to take the town to pieces.

He pursued the citizens like a farmer hunting cottontails. He shot two men, just wounding them, luckily. He just about knocked the heads off a few others; and he filled the little jail as full as a sardine can with people he thought had voted against him. He kicked in doors and he broke windows. He was on a rampage for sure, and as the night progressed he got worse.

It was along toward half past eleven when Farley showed up in town. Somebody had gone out to the hot springs to tell him what was going on. There he was, a young little shrimp for size, and sort of uncertain as to what to do. He was still in his fishing clothes and wearing the stained old canvas coat.

"Doc," he says to me, "I have been informed that the election was in my favor. When am I supposed to take over the office?"

"Right now," says I, although as a matter of fact I didn't know. "And you've sure got a big chance tonight. You're an ambitious young fellow. If you can handle this Springer madman, the whole town is yours to have and to hold from now to forever after."

"Yes, that's true." He nods thoughtfully.

"But watch your step," I add. "Two gents that really know how to handle guns have already faced him. One of them has a hole through his lung, and the other a busted arm. I advise you to creep up on him from behind and blow off the top of his head. If you do, I'll guarantee the town will raise a fat bonus for you inside an hour's time."

But Farley objects. He says he can handle a gun, all right; but that he isn't going to shoot any man from behind. Bill Forrest comes along about this time and backs me in my argument. However, it's no use.

"I'll go talk to Springer," says Farley. "Maybe he'll listen to reason."

"*You'll* do the listenin' if you try it," says Bill. "You'll be listenin' to the angels. And if you don't wake up in heaven, it'll be in the jail. Springer dotes on guys of your size when he's in his present mood."

"I'm going to try it, anyhow," says Farley. "Springer hasn't picked on me for a long while."

"He's been savin' up for tonight, probably," says Forrest.

But Farley doesn't hear him; he's already on his way up the street, looking for Springer.

NO TASK could be easier than that. Before Farley, followed by Bill and myself, had gone half a block, Springer came lumbering out of a saloon door. He had poor old Porridge Potts, of his bank, slung over his shoulder, and he

was on his way to the jail. Potts was dead to the world.

"Wait a moment, Springer," says Farley, stepping up to him. "You can't do that."

"Thash funny!" says Springer. "I *am* doin' it—an' who the hell is gonna shtop me?"

I was right behind Farley and I saw that drunken, mean, devilish gleam leap into Springer's eyes that I knew all too well. With a shrug of his shoulder he lets Potts fall to the ground and takes a step forward.

"You're a witnesh, Doc," he says, "that thish sawed off li'l runt is pickin' on me. I been too good natured; but now I—"

"You're breaking the law," Farley cuts in.

"I'll break your jaw!" roars Springer. "Don't try to tell *me* I'm breakin' the law. I *am* the law. You think I pay any 'tenshun to crooked electionsh? Shee thish shtar? Thash the emblem of the law. And there'sh no man big enough in thish county to take it away from me! Now, shrimp, I'm goin' to work you over!"

With that, Springer's right hand flashed out. No, he didn't hit Farley on the jaw. Not yet. He wanted to play with him; to cuff him around, first. Springer had a big streak of cruelty in him when drunk.

So as usual, that right hand of his grabs for Farley's coat lapel. His favorite hold. Firm and hard, he grabbed that lapel and started to yank Farley toward him.

Right then and there Springer let out a howl you could have heard across the river. Nobody knew what was wrong, for a moment. Even Farley had forgotten that big fishhook which old Sing Lee had fastened to the inside of his coat lapel.

The point of the hook had sunk into Springer's middle finger, clear to the bone. You should have heard him howl! It must have hurt, something fierce, what with the barb and all. And Springer never was a man to stand up to knives or hooks and such. You could hit him with a sledge hammer and he'd keep coming; but draw a little blood and he was through.

So there he was, hooked tight to Farley's coat. And the more he wriggled, the worse it hurt. It took him about three or four seconds to realize that.

It was a strange sort of tableau, so to speak. Springer was pretty well sobered up by now. His left hand was clasping the lapel and part of his right hand, to keep any movement from wiggling the hook. His hat had fallen off, and he was dripping sweat.

Farley wasn't hurt a bit. He just stood there and grinned, and the more Springer bellowed the more the youngster grinned. Well, I don't blame him; it was sweet revenge.

Suddenly Farley reached out and pulled Springer's Colt from its holster. He cocked the gun and shoved the muzzle against Springer's belly. Then with his left hand he unpinned the star from the larger man's vest. And all Springer could do was to hang on to that lapel with both hands.

Farley dropped the star into his pants pocket. He reached out again with his left hand, searched Springer's vest until he found some keys on a ring. He dropped the keys into the same pocket that held the star. Then, sort of easy-like, still grinning, he slid out of the canvas coat.

He hung on to the coat with his left hand, keeping the cocked Colt in his right.

"Here," he says to Bill Forrest, "take hold of this coat and lead him. I'm going to shove him into jail."

The parade went toward the livery stable, with Bill leading Springer like he was a bull with a nose ring. Right behind came Farley, with his gun; and strung along back of him was myself and about half the citizens of Oro Rio.

Springer hasn't a word to say. There's no more fight left in him, and he's crying like a baby. After he was safe inside

the jail, and the rest of the men in it safely out, I went to work on that fishhook. It wasn't a pleasant job, with Springer carrying on so. But finally I got it out, wrapped up his finger, and he felt better.

Farley and the rest had gone by this time, but I stayed around awhile with Springer. I couldn't help feeling a trifle sorry for him. He simply could not understand what had happened.

"My star!" was about all he could say. "That li'l shrimp took my star." And then, after awhile, "I don't care much, anyhow, Doc. Who wants to be marshal of a town like this has got to be? It ain't a real town any more. It—it's too damn *big!*"

An' that proves what I started out to say. Some folks grow with a town and some don't. And those that don't have an almighty uncomfortable time of it.

Take Farley, now. He's grown. He just about owns Oro Rio. Well, he should. He's a right, regular fellow. He even helped Tom Springer, after he served his two years in prison for those shootings, to start right up in business again.

We get along fine, Farley and me. Fact is, we've had only one argument in all these years. We never could agree as to whether Sing Lee knew just what he was about when he put that big fishhook in Farley's lapel. Farley says no; I say yes.

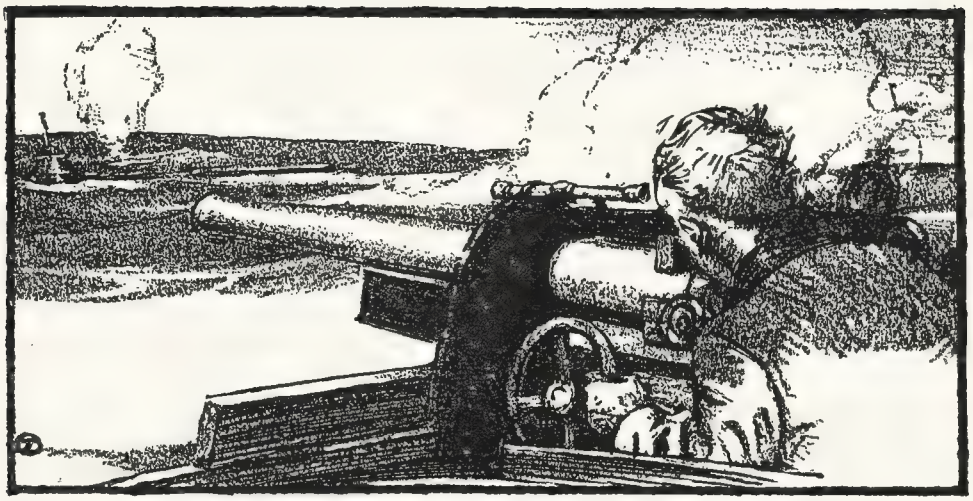
Sing Lee himself, before he went back to China—on Farley's money—never would tell. But you know how these chinks are. Deep—awfully deep.

Crossing the Old Bridge

(*Thresher's Retrospect*)

By HARRY KEMP

WITH sharp blasts warning, wherever the road bent, blind;
Jouncing the cook-shack and separator behind,
The engine went; bumping heavily over the road,
Snorting and whistling. Fields of stacked wheat showed
To left and right. Along a crooked fence
A chipmunk whirled in comic, striped pretense
Of racing with us; squeaking in a pet
For notice that it sought and didn't get.
The screams of jaybirds filled the jangling air.
"Hey! Slow up! Old bridge!" How much it would bear
Was doubtful: but the engine, in a trice,
(As skaters take it, quick, across thin ice)
Went booming over, through a stifling shower
Of dust and splinters. Going any slower,
Laughed the driver at the engine, with a wink,
Would leave the ancient structure time to think;
But, if with thunder like a meteor's ball
We took it leaping, we could be across
While the old bridge itself was at a loss
Whether it ought to bear us up, or fall!



SOVEREIGN GOLD

A Story of War at Sea

By GORDON CARROLL

MALTBIE, the Bank of England man, stood behind a wind screen on the *Loriant's* bridge, where he had been a close attendant during the first part of the voyage. He was a bit over sixty, and the hair about his temples was broadly streaked with silver.

The *Loriant,* 12,000 tons and converted, was nearing land again after eight days out from Liverpool. Stormy weather off the Grand Banks had given way to light airs and smooth sea as the liner steered in to make a landfall, her wake embroidering a weary line back into the green of the North Atlantic. Another day should see the *Loriant* safely berthed at New York, where—Maltbie's trust discharged—a pleasant interlude, with the best room and bath money could procure, waited for him before returing to England.

The millions in gold and securities on board were the reason for his passage. He was attendant as official witness should the activity of a German raider compel the dumping of the strongboxes. But nothing had happened. The danger zone had been passed without event.

On the bridge, Maltbie was discussing the shipment with Captain Mainware.

"It is the exchange, Captain," he said. "The exchange is against us. These huge war purchases in the States cannot be balanced by the moderate exports we are able to send over. When we left Liverpool, the sovereign was worth four dollars, seventy-one cents in Ameri-

ca . . . Four dollars, seventy-one cents!" He fingered his jaw. "I tell you, Captain, I don't know where it's going to end. We can't make securities, y'know. Can't create gold out of stardust. The loss of a few shipments such as the *Loriant* carries, the resulting drop in the exchange rate, the effect on—"

The drumming of the wireless telephone cut in on his talk. The bridge messenger turned inquiringly, holding out the receiver as a supplement to his words.

"Radio operator wants to know if he can leave the 'phones, sir. Says he has to see you."

The captain nodded idly. The request, which would have raised an instant alarm six days ago, now seemed trivial and quite normal. There might be requisitions for checking, receipts to be signed. Approaching port, the operator would be completing his accounts. The captain was unconcerned. He turned about and awarded Maltbie new consideration.

" 'Tis the exchange, then, Mr. Maltbie, that seems to be worrying you?" The skipper fished a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his ruddy nose.

"Yes, Captain. As I say, we can't manufacture securities. Things will come to a pretty pass, I warn you. We haven't got the vital surplus exports . . . Four dollars, seventy-one cents! H-r-r-rumph!" Maltbie sighed.

The wireless operator stepped on to the bridge—a thin youth with a pink face, shiny from shaving soap and water.

"A queer business, sir. Thought it best to report instead of telephoning. Some station addressing a message to ABMV, and another trying to jam it out. Can't get any more than the prefix, when the jamming begins."

The captain replaced his handkerchief.

"Atmospherics, eh?" he asked.

The operator shook his head violently.

"No, sir, not atmospherics. I've taken ABMV, though distant, twice in this watch; and looking up the junior's jottings for the last watch, I see he had traces, too. Whatever is jamming the message out is closer to us than the sender. I don't know what to make of it."

There was a short silence, while the wash of the sea sounded clearly on the bridge. The captain ran a finger down his nose in reflection.

"Y'mean that a message from a land station to us is being interfered with, deliberately, from somewhere close at hand?"

The operator produced the slip that bore the junior's scribblings. Among the jumble of noughts and crosses there was a scrawled ABMV, then x-marks.

"What else, sir? At first I thought it was atmospheric. Sort of looked natural-like. X's were fierce last watch. But x's can't happen that way, twice running."

Mainware slowly buttoned the top of his jacket.

"All right. Carry on again. Let me know if there's anything further. Gear must be manned continuously from now on. Keep your junior close at hand."

The operator wheeled about and vanished. Maltbie turned to the skipper.

"ABMV, he says?"

"Yes. All British merchant vessels, it stands for. See?"

"Oh!" Maltbie silently chided himself. His memory was getting poor . . .

THE captain lapsed into silence. From the forepeak came the voice of a sailor, intoning a meaningless tune. One of the booms on the forward well-deck creaked monotonously in its lashings. The air was cold and fresh; visibility was fading with the afternoon. Maltbie changed his thoughts. He knew something of the *Loriant's* potential perils.

A queer business, this jamming of the wireless. He trimmed the possibilities in his mind. It was now nearly twilight. As she was going, the *Loriant* should make Nantucket Lightship at daybreak;

the usual landfall for the voyage. There was not much else to work on. A message being sent, and some one making determined efforts to prevent reception. A raider?

The captain heeled about again.

"I'm thinking, Mr. Maltbie, that measuring distance and course and speed, enemy action would best succeed off Nantucket or the Virginia Capes. Eh?"

Maltbie nodded.

"Seems most likely, Captain."

"Wireless may mean nothing. But it can mean a lot." Mainware cleared his throat abruptly. "I think I'll cut in between Nantucket and the Capes, make land below Atlantic City, and take advantage of territorial waters. If there's nothing behind the jamming, there'll be no harm done—we'll lose only ten hours on the trip. If a raider is out, we'll be off the expected route."

The captain passed the orders. Maltbie stepped into the wheelhouse and made for the companionway. His heels clinked on the brass stripping, and the warmish odor of the cabins came up to meet him. As he turned the knob of his stateroom door, he felt the *Loriant* start a slow swing. He sat down on the edge of the bed.

A rum business, this. It was the shipment below decks that worried him. Twelve millions, it was. Twelve millions! Maltbie did a rapid calculation, in which dollars and sovereigns were translated into terms of food and supplies. The result was staggering. It wasn't the weight of the figures that stirred him so much; it was the rasping irrition of his fears. This morning he had believed all danger past; they were eight days out. At the start of the voyage he had had qualms, fed by enemy activity off the Channel. But here, close to America, the sea was thought to be clear. He swallowed hard.

Twelve millions! Jove, it was too much to lose. Sort of thing a chap didn't like even to think about. Set one's heart to thumping a bit over normal . . . And all because of this war.

Maltbie stood up abruptly. Pshaw, imagination was running away with him! The shipment was safe as a church. He ruffled his graying hair, and smiled at the blank wall of the cabin. He was letting reflections make a querulous fool of him. What were a few words from a pink cheeked wireless operator? Fellow was probably new to the game and passed his fears around gratuitously, eager to find excitement in an otherwise monotonous scene. All balderdash!

Maltbie pressed the bell for his steward and ordered dinner in the cabin. Beyond the ports, the scarlet of the sunset was fading like the rim of a lowered lamp wick.

When Maltbie returned to the bridge, the night was quiet. The *Loriant* was steering into the dim afterglow of the sky, the forward mast and rigging standing in faint outline against the lingering light as the ship held to her course—south four points. The captain was curiously silent, and stumped back and forth across a narrow sector of the bridge. The seaman lookout aloft turned from his post and scanned the wake striking away into the distance; for a moment, he wondered at the arrival of a mate to share his watch. Then he faced forward again.

PASSENGERS, strolling after dinner, watched the unusual activity on the boat deck where hands were clearing the boat gear. While the carpenter and his mates made the rounds, screwing down blinds to the ports and darkening ship, other passengers hurried up from below and joined the groups on deck. Excitement spread rapidly. They had thought all danger behind when, in thirty degrees west, the order was given to discard the cumbersome life-jackets which had been worn continuously since leaving the Mersey. And now—almost on the threshold of security and firm land—again the disturbing restrictions and routine, the sinister preparations, the atmosphere of sudden and harsh

danger. Maltbie speculated on the number of alarms and rumors which would be speeding from lip to lip. The captain halted in his pacing.

"Too much excitement," he snorted, motioning aft with a sweeping hand. "I'm going to tell them."

He reached for the telephone and got the radio man on the wire.

"Print a bulletin for the passengers. Say we've heard the twitter of a strange bird on the air. Y'understand?"

The operator understood. The telephone clicked off; the captain resumed his pacing. Maltbie leaned over the port rail and stared at the sea below, strangely black and sinister, now that all lights were doused. The smell of the waves, cold and salt and wet, came up to his nostrils. The *Loriant* held to fifteen knots.

At 11 P.M. the strange bird was identified, setting the captain's conjectures and theories at rest. The operator, changing his wave length suddenly from 600 to 300 meters, succeeded in taking the message, and came running to the bridge. Mainware snatched the paper from him and held it beneath the shaded lamp of the chart table.

FROM BERMUDA. TO ABMV. GERMAN ARMED SUBMARINE LEFT NEWPORT TENTH STOP ALL PRECAUTIONS END.

Maltbie digested the message in silence. A submarine!

Impulses he had thought were dormant forever suddenly began to tingle, fed by a heavy pulse that had birth in his heart and slowly crept upward. A flush of warmth coursed over his cheeks. For some inexplicable reason, the fingers of his right hand commenced to tremble. The responsibility of years fell from his shoulders, and his memory reached back to a gray morning two years before.

He was standing in an arched room, drab with stone, facing a man in a naval uniform. Maltbie's voice somehow was thin, and the paper he held in his hand fluttered gently. The paper had just been returned to him by the man in uniform, who was now speaking gravely.

"Sorry, sir," the junior lieutenant said sympathetically, "but we haven't reached your bracket—yet. God pray we never do! But if it should come to pass, we'll gladly call on you. Yes, sir! Gladly!"

Maltbie had swallowed, and left the room with leaden steps. He went back to his desk and his rows of figures; to his rack of carefully cleaned pens and the piles of great ledgers. All that day he kept his eyes glued to the figures before him. He was afraid of his eyes; they were likely to play queer tricks. For instance, fill with moisture, and glisten, for others to see. Luckily, he reflected, he had voiced his intention of enlisting to no one.

Beyond the bracket, eh? Somehow, he hadn't kept as close track of the years as he should have. 1914, it was, now. Damme, it seemed impossible! Let's see . . . Ten years back to 1904. Ten more to '94. Twenty, all told. And twenty, added to forty-two, was— He blinked his eyes again. It was true! The man in uniform had been sharp to the point. The R. N. R. could get the country's youth; why seek age? Lads were better at the hard game of war.

Maltbie drew his Naval Reserve papers from an inner pocket and placed them in the bottom drawer of his desk. A turn to the key and they were safe; out of harm's way, and his own. No one knew his gnawing disappointment. No one would ever know.

He returned to the long row of figures he had been adding before other thoughts stole his concentration. The great clock on the wall struck the hour —two solemn, deep throated notes. The Bank of England was closing. In his paneled cubicle, he would be busy until six with the bank's business. An old ass, he was, to let sentiment interfere! His pen raced madly.

MONTHS later, the notice had come without warning. On a sodden, foggy morning, he stood on the Liverpool quay and stared up at the high sides of the *Loriant*. The shipment—his shipment—was going aboard in great steel boxes, while armed men stood by the gang and watched the dock sheds carefully. Maltbie had moved up the plank briskly, stepped on to the deck.

By afternoon everything was finished. Captain Mainware and he had smoked a cigar in the skipper's lounge. Tea was served. And deep in the strong room, twelve millions rested comfortably in foolproof chests, covered with crackling ribbon and splotches of the bank's crimson wax. The *Loriant* sailed at midnight.

Now he was standing on the ship's bridge, while Mainware's ruddy face stared stolidly through the heavy panes of glass. A moment ago an amazing circumstance had disrupted their calm assurance. Conversation was suddenly ended; a slip of white Marconi paper seemed as large as the world.

In a new warfare, by traverse of a route they thought was clear, the impossible swiftly became stern reality. The mightest war fleet the sea had ever floated was impotent to help—made helpless by the farflung expanse of the ocean, where a thousand cruisers, even were there that many, would appear only as ink specks on a blotter. Maltbie unconsciously straightened his shoulders, settled his heavy coat.

It was time to revise the Standard Manual, draw text from the games of old. The operation of an underwater threat to shipping—twenty-five hundred miles from home port—was dramatic in intensity. The White Ensign was far away. And a well worn 4.7 gun on the *Loriant's* after deck, hastily mounted and manned by a temporary R. N. R. crew, was the ship's only weapon. The drums of war had set up a note heard beyond the six fathoms of territorial water.

Mainware's voice, concerned and gruff, broke into Maltbie's thoughts.

"Amazing, Mr. Maltbie," he was saying. "Thought the Hun stopped at thirty degrees west. Rubbish! Even the Atlantic's not broad enough. I'm going aft to speak the R. N. R crew. Will you go along?"

They walked down a long ship's corridor, glistening with white paint and lighted by frosted bulbs. Men were mopping the linoleum, their soap buckets thickening the air with the reek of antiseptic. The captain's voice trailed on, sweeping back across his broad shoulders, filling the narrow confines of the passageway:

"A submarine from Newport, I figger, will certainly go down off Nantucket. Our course is taking us ninety miles south o' that. Problem is—what's the measure of the sub's activity?"

"Yes," Maltbie assented. "A U-boat that can navigate across the Atlantic is something new. Speed and armament unknown. It's hard to gage his movements by the types we know, eh?"

"It is," the captain agreed readily. "I'm thinking I'll be making three figgers of that ninety miles."

They clattered down a companionway, stepped out into the damp of the night, and passed the hatches on the aft well-deck. They climbed to the level of the gun platform, high on the stern, where a junior R. N. R. lieutenant hung by the rail and sucked at an empty pipe. He straightened up and touched his visor. Maltbie moved away to the rail while the youth, his cap tilted with a tiny swagger, conversed with the captain. The rumble of their voices went on.

Behind Maltbie, the long, tapering barrel of the 4.7 gun pointed astern, set true upon the wake that was now being quickly swallowed up in the darkness. Through the *Loriant's* plates, the pulse of the ship beat high in the thrust and tremor of the engines, opened to utmost speed.

Though dark, the night boasted a weak moon in the east, shedding the

faintest light to brighten the black waters. The clean cut bow wave was breaking well aft, showing like a ghostly finger in the gloom, level and unhindered, while the swirl of smoke from the two funnels hung low astern, joining the sea and sky in a blacker curtain. Its tenacity was promise of misty weather when day broke. Maltbie forsook the rail and moved closer to the gun.

Again it stirred memories to stand behind the breech and feel cold, sweated metal beneath his fingers. He felt over the block, the wheels, the firing button, the range finder—a cold tube of steel covered with thin grease. A dozen rounds of 4.7 ammunition glinted in a box lashed to the gun's mounting. The remainder of the platform was clear. A tiny tremor passed through Maltbie's frame; he bowed his head for the space of a short breath. It was like the old days! Jove, sir, the old navy! Then he raised his head and stared beyond the stern. Rot! He was just a passenger, now. His reserve papers were still in the bottom drawer of his London desk. He smiled wanly.

Snatches of conversation came to his ears. Mainware was finishing:

"True, the odds are light . . . Yes, yes, quite right . . . Amazing, isn't it—the Hun's damnable ingenuity? Something new under the sun, eh? . . . Your crew all fit?"

"Yes, sir."

THE captain clambered down the steel ladder, Maltbie following. They crossed the well-deck and entered the corridor again. The smell of soap was still strong, but the moppers had vanished. The bulbs burned cheerfully.

"We've no choice," Mainware vouchsafed. "We're carrying passengers; gunfire's risky, not to say impossible. But there's no reason to be cold pudding. Circumstances will have to guide us. Twelve millions is twelve millions, Mr. Maltbie."

Maltbie felt a lump return to his throat. Yes, twelve millions was a tidy sum. It was badly needed, what with things as they were. The sovereign was wobbling. He forced a smile.

"We'll trust to luck, Captain. As I say, England can't create securities. Hold what you've got is a good motto."

They returned to the bridge, where the skipper actually made the ninety miles into something over three figures. Hot coffee was set on the shelf. Maltbie drank the steaming liquid and pulled his coat collar around his chin. The damp was penetrating.

Just before dawn the *Loriant* passed two eastbound vessels. They had already taken the Bermuda message and were alert, though slowly pulling away from danger. A third ship had no wireless, and headed up across the *Loriant's* course. The liner spoke her; her lights snapped off, and she wallowed in behind the larger vessel. But the freighter was quickly left astern, dark and sullen and fearful, with creaking engines pushing her westward at nine knots.

Daybreak came with the thin veils of settled weather that sometimes turn to a helpful haze beneath the warmth of the sun. The *Loriant* began to zigzag in a wide S from the first half light, for she was now south of the Lightship. In the smooth, glassy surface of the sea lay a good aid to her best defense—the roving measure of human eyes.

Maltbie awoke from a catnap, found himself cocked back against the wall in a folding chair. The faint light streaked across Captain Mainware's face, where he stood by the charts, and threw into relief small lines that had not been visible the night before. He continuously ran one finger down his beaked nose. Maltbie yawned self-consciously.

"What's up?" he asked, leaving the chair.

The skipper's finger smudged the chart.

"About here, if you want to know. Wireless is clear again; has been right along. But I'm worried, Mr. Maltbie. My passengers, y'know. And the Hun's

damned callousness—" The voice trailed off.

"Not in these waters, Captain," Maltbie volunteered.

Mainware shrugged, bespeaking doubt.

In the crow's nest, the second officer kept a keen lookout. He had had the bitter experience of an enemy submarine in the Mediterranean and was desirous that it should not be repeated. Maltbie stared at the doubled lookout with curious detachment. The threat of actual danger seemed remote, now that day was coming upon the sea. A long finger of mauve poked upward in the east; the air was fresh, as after the passage of a Summer storm. The clatter of coffee pots and the nasal voice of a galley boy came from the forecastle.

But the unusual circumstance of zigzagging and straining lookout for a periscope in American waters had gripped the ship. Maltbie was forced to admit this, in spite of himself. Every fleck of flotsam was scanned with apprehension. The far flung curl of the *Loriant's* displacement, spitting on the eddy of the zigzag, threw up a curling feather that called for frequent scrutiny. And there was no lack of unofficial assistance to the lookout.

As the minutes passed and the day grew apace, the passengers stirred, each of them encompassed in a life-jacket that continually emphasized danger. Gazing constantly outboard and all about, they added their eyes to the muster. Once, a floating crate was hailed as "Submarine in sight!" The crate was identified, and a sheepish grin passed around. For the first time, the captain blew noisily into his handkerchief.

Maltbie stood with his hands in the pockets of his greatcoat. Occasionally he moved out to the wing of the bridge; then retraced his steps. All the while, the burden of trepidation grew in his soul. Twelve millions was his charge; for Mainware, seventy passengers. Oh, damme! A curse on war!

Suddenly, a check on the distant horizon drew the eyes in the crow's nest. Maltbie saw the swift lift to the second officer's shoulder, extending past the bole of the mast. The seaman behind the screen followed the pointing finger. They sang in unison and reported a gray scavenger—broad on the port bow.

THE circle of Mainware's telescope and the twin lenses of Maltbie's glasses showed the clean cut horizon ruling a thread on the monotint of sea and sky. Sweeping around, they both caught the gray pinnacle at the same moment. It was too distant for ready recognition, and only by close scrutiny, observing a hairline that rose and fell on either side of the point, were they able to distinguish the submarine. The fellow, far to the south of his expected lair, was pressing on at full speed, trusting to a casual lookout and the camouflage of natural background.

Maltbie's fine confidence, vaguely anticipating the meeting, gave way suddenly to a somber mood, dull as the gray of the U-boat. Jove, this was the real thing! And as he stared through his glasses, Mainware altered the *Loriant's* course, steering northward.

The intermittent crackle of the wireless set up a harsh song of danger, streaked it out on a thousand searching paths of the air, told the surface ships to beware. The gun crew aft came to life with a rush and brought the gun to bear. The last of the curious passengers was herded below by stewards, scuttling up and down the decks like white coated warrant servers; stateroom and saloon doors banged shut. Another gust of smoke poured from the *Loriant's* funnels, reached down to the surface of the sea, billowed away like the folds in a wind tossed blanket. The bridge phone from the radio room hummed on a strident note; Mainware took the rubber cup from the messenger's hand.

"Figger one hundred miles away, eh?" The skipper's face suddenly became grim. "Nothing closer? H'm—carry

on!" He rubbed his nose with the familiar motion.

"No help for us, Mr. Maltbie. Halifax ships are off on the wrong scent. You better go below, sir." The captain's voice had changed to brisk officiality.

Maltbie smiled.

"That an order, Captain?"

"Tchk, tchk! Of course not. Merely advice, man."

"I'll stay here, then."

"So be it." The captain moved toward the chart table, halted to take the phone again. "Can't say, Lieutenant." He had the aft gunnery officer on the wire. "In the hands of the gods. We will reply to direct fire, of course. . . . Lord help us, mister, there's no other choice."

He banged the receiver down. Maltbie glimpsed betraying moisture in the skipper's eyes. Always the passengers . . .

Without warning, a spurt of flame threw out from the distant submarine—a long, lean needle of orange that stabbed a hole in the gray scene. The U-boat had noted the *Loriant's* change in course and knew there was no hope of reaching torpedo range unobserved. The first shell fell short by a thousand yards, sending up a graceful bloom of spray that quickly dissolved into streamers and fell back to the surface. A pregnant silence came down in the wheel house.

Slowly, Mainware's face became crimson; the veins in his forehead stood out boldly and his shoulders shook. He struck the shelf before him with a heavy fist.

"The dirty beast!" he snorted. "Damn him, that's no warning shot. It's ready fire. It's—" He called the gunnery man on the phone.

Silence, and then the *Loriant's* gun fired. The muzzle was at extreme elevation, but the answer failed to reach. A burst appeared on the surface, barely discernible. There were only fifty rounds on the platform, and Mainware reached for the phone again. The gun layer's voice came thin on the black wire.

"You'll be reserving your fire, sir," the captain said into the mouthpiece. "The Hun should be closing in, and you'll get a better prospect, soon." The receiver clanked on the hook.

All the while Maltbie stood behind the skipper, six feet distant. The slate-blue of his own eyes had turned a shade darker, and now they were matching in color the tint of the horizon, where the sun's warmth was thickening the air. A strange tension had taken possession of his body. The confidence was gone—quite gone—but in its place was a stern sense of duty, an emotion which was at once both new and old. New, because it waked recent fears he had thought were safely at rest, with the voyage almost done; old, because it roused yearnings he had thought were vanished with age. His mind leaped back over the years. . .

BESIEGED Ladysmith lay black against a sun baked scene. The naval guns had come up from the coast, across torturous road and cruel country. Somehow he was by the breech of a long barrel, a member of the crew. A fierce sun stabbed down through his helmet and set his head to buzzing. The long gun spoke, quivered, settled back on its makeshift haunches—queer wheels and tails that held it to a sandy earth. The stench of gunpowder stung his nostrils; tiny balls of fleece blossomed in the brass sky above and showered down spiteful bits of metal. The White Ensign was stuck in the ground nearby. Navy blue was mixed with khaki. It was all strange, all amazing. And when the African sun went down, he had leaned against the gun, while queer pinpricks rasped his nerves. Under fire, they were! By God, under fire!

Today, on the *Loriant's* bridge, those pinpricks returned. A wild jumble of reflections made chaos in his brain. Thoughts assembled themselves in a caravan, then disrupted, spread, lapped through the corridors of his mind like

running tongues of fire. Afraid, was he? Not much! There was a new lift to his thin shoulders, a new set to his chin. Then his eyes fell on Mainware.

The skipper's corded neck, the tautness of his cheeks, the throbbing veins that laced the tanned hands, caught Maltbie's glance. A John Bull, that man! 'Twas the breed, sir, that counted. The underlying, deep-set, rich blood of English stock. Stubborn muscles rooted to the steel of a ship built on the Clyde. Inseparable, the two; indivisible. Good for the ages! Passengers were safe in such keeping; Maltbie's shipment was safer. And—damn the Hun!

For the second time, the U-boat fired. There was a burst of flame, a long drawn out wail, and the projectile passed above the *Loriant's* forepeak and disappeared off to starboard in a bubbling pencil of spray. Instantly, the liner's gun fired. Maltbie watched the answering shell fall. Too short! A sense of sudden anger shook him. It was the Admiralty's fault, all this. Sheer negligence! Lack of foresight! Lack of everything!

Harnessing ships for war with only the guns that could be spared from battlefield and naval armament. Ammunition furnished of as many patterns as there were marks on a gold invoice sheet. Odd weapons pressed into service, varying from pipestems to those that once served as major armament on cruisers. Russian and Japanese field-pieces; even captured German guns. The problem of fitting a 4.7 to a 12-pounder emplacement, or *vice-versa,* was merely a tax upon patience and ingenuity. But it could be done—and was.

Get the gun on the ship's platform—that was the order. No time to wonder why or wherefore. Man the weapon with pink cheeked youngsters, fresh from brokers' offices. Turn 'em loose upon the sea. Give 'em a ship and entrust to their skill three-score passengers, and a priceless cargo. Save the passengers, if you can; rot the cargo! What's twelve millions? Who's Maltbie? To hell with his cares! And today, gentlemen, the sovereign is quoted at four seventy-one in New York . . .

Maltbie cursed softly beneath his breath, and turned his glasses toward the U-boat. The Hun was converging on to the *Loriant's* course as Mainware sheered off to northward, thinning the target of the liner's sides and giving the aft gun a better chance. Off and on, he spoke through the phone. Now he had the radio operator; and was partially repeating, after him, in unconscious monotone:

"Call and counter call, eh? . . What's that? Halifax sending long messages in code? . . Coastal stations joined in? . . Hurry, man, hurry!"

The haze over the sea was holding, but not increasing. Tenacious as a terrier, the U-boat foamed the horizon off to port, keeping pace like the outrider on a catamaran. Neither ahead nor behind; but steady. At spaced intervals, like the mechanical thump of a piston, the submarine's gun fired. Two columns of spume rose off the liner's starboard bow, one on the port. Queer, fragile ladies of white, they were, as gossamer as the lace they resembled. But the captain frowned.

"A sorry game, Mr. Maltbie," he confided in a low voice. "Nearest help eighty miles away. That Hun's a super-sub. No losing him. Damn their resourcefulness—the blighters!"

Suddenly, two hundred feet beyond the *Loriant's* bow and high in the air, a puff ball of smoke burst. The flame quickly died, the smoke faded away, but below, the sea was lashed into an agony of froth. Fleece-like smears of foam appeared on the surface and then as swiftly vanished.

"Shrapnel, Captain," Maltbie said, surprised at the steadiness of his voice. It was quite matter-of-fact. Mainware nodded.

"I think it will be meaning the end, sir," he replied in a faraway tone, as though the intensity of his thoughts was

slowly stifling him. "The end. I take my chances on solid shot; the Hun's too far for torpedo. But shrapnel! Why, man, it can make a shambles!"

There was a certain flavor of cold finality to the words. Maltbie bowed his head in mixed anger and pity; and was ashamed at the moisture which sprang into his eyes. He had been a blithering dolt! Sentimental confidence in a Clyde built ship could not conceal the true facts. What was the liner's lone gun in the face of this fire? The odds were ridiculously unfair; the conning tower of a submarine against the high, black sides of a 12,000-ton boat. Not sporting, it wasn't. Nor just!

"Come, man," he muttered to himself, "it will soon be time to dump the shipment."

CHILL gloom had settled on the wheelhouse. The other men who stood on the matting, in various attitudes, eyed the skipper covertly, waiting for the signal which would calm the engines. The wireless still crackled its disconsolate song, but even the spit of the arc-jump had lost its snap. The dull vibration of the gun firing shook objects, and they rattled faintly. The captain sought one last conversation with the gunnery officer.

"Odds are too great, Lieutenant." Mainware's lips were pressed against the mouthpiece, as though the cool of the rubber cup steadied his tongue. "Must think of the passengers. We'll be swinging the boats out next. . . . Yes, too bad. . . . Done your best. . . . Make ready for your—"

A shell suddenly burst with a roar far aft, the rippling detonation riding along the *Loriant's* decks. The telephone in Mainware's hand gave a harsh squawk, and died. The fingers that held the mouthpiece shook.

"Hello! Hello! . . . What the—" But the wire was quite dead. Mainware spun about. Reason and impulse made a riot of the captain's brain. The gun crew was knocked out! One shrapnel burst, enveloping in its intensity, had either stunned or killed the *Loriant's* defenders.

Mainware sought Maltbie with his eyes, but the Bank of England man had vanished. The seaman at the wheel and the bridge officers stared stolidly at their skipper. Mainware's hand curved over the brass hood of the engine telegraph, fingers tightening like a vice about the lever.

Maltbie raced along the dimly lighted corridor, a confusion of issues crowding his mind for settlement, each a small stab to jar and goad in their trifling. Everything was puzzling. Thoughts piled themselves one on top of the other with the rapidity of his pattering feet on the linoleum; then the whole mind structure crumpled and fell, creating new pandemonium.

Doors along the corridor opened and shut, but he neither saw nor heard them. The electric bulbs seemed to burn like pinpoints in a dark sky. Stewards flattened against the wall momentarily, to give the bank man passageway . . . Gorblime, the old fellow was moving!

Maltbie had no time to analyze his motivation in detail. Somehow, in all the confusion, there seemed but one issue at stake. The shipment! Twelve millions, cold and crisp, it was. Sacredly valuable; quite irreplaceable. The passengers were Mainware's consideration, alone; let him bear that burden. But the bank had entrusted its blood to him. Damme, sir, he'd do his best!

He paused for an instant at the saloon door, where the cold air touched his flushed cheeks, and stared across the hatches to the aft deck. The gun still pointed off the port beam, but the platform was strangely quiet. Dark huddles lay on the boards, sprawled and unmoving. Above and beyond the rail was a glimpse of the white, curling wake, lashing back into the distance. A stench of gunpowder hung in the air.

Pulling on the hand rail, Maltbie

managed the steel steps to the stern and felt the wooden platform beneath his feet. Some of the planks were torn and jagged; splinters lay in little yellow sheaves. The lanky lieutenant who had hung over the railing last night with a cold pipe between his teeth, now was sprawled at the base of the gun mounting, his white topped cap an arm's length away. Two other men lay nearby. A fourth sagged limply across a stanchion. The fifth, the gun layer, struggled on the planks to reach the mechanism of the breech—one leg dangling and shattered, splotched with scarlet. With a faint sigh, he gave up the effort. Breath ripped out of his lungs in agonizing snatches.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" The words stumbled helplessly across Maltbie's tongue. His body suddenly shook with tension. "Oh, God!"

The *Loriant* was heeling down. Maltbie missed the thrust and bite to the racing propellers; the wake was thinning as the skipper bowed to the inevitable. The engine room indicator now pointed to "Slow".

A spot of anger grew in Maltbie's throat, displacing his fears, quieting the bedlam in his brain. Why, things were simple! Precious minutes would pass before the Hun came up under the *Loriant's* sides; minutes in which a man could do a lot. For instance, carry on! He stepped behind the breech.

Two thousand yards off to port, the U-boat's gun spoke again, embroidering another bloom in the sky, a pistol shot beyond the liner's stern. Maltbie squinted along the barrel of the 4.7 and laid his shaking hand on the elevating wheel. Now, it was! There! He pressed the firing button.

The long barrel leaped, trembled, recoiled with an easy, velvet motion; tatters of smoke fled from the muzzle. Maltbie shaded his eyes with the vizor of his hand. He could see the low lying silhouette of the submarine against the sky, noted the infinitesimal cluster of black dots forward, huddled about the gun. The shot he had just sped on its way fell short, and sent up a plume of spray in line with the U-boat's mid-section. Not bad! Hurry, man!

THE empty shell case fell to the platform, an inert tube of hot brass clattering against its mates. Maltbie cradled another shell in his arms and forced it home. His heart was pounding in great thumps, but deep inside he felt calm and cool, as though his flushed body were detached from his nerve centers. Everything seemed more natural now; the roar of the first shot had soothed him. True, the gun was strange to him, but he was getting her feel. Breech mechanism hadn't changed much in twenty years. Hurry, man!

His second shot pitched close to the Hun, and ricocheted. Maltbie blinked his straining eyes. Gad, the cluster of black dots was broken up; there was more activity now about the base of the conning tower. The range was dropping fast, what with the *Loriant's* thrust slackening and the Hun setting a convergent course. Maltbie pushed a third shell home.

Calm, now, calm; no need getting flurried. The next shots must tell, or it will be too late. Wonder what the Boche thinks about the one-man gun crew? Lord, he'll be puzzled! His glasses must be hard worked . . . All right, come and take me! Come, but not too fast! I've got a few more shots in the locker. There—that's right! Not too fast! . .

The submarine was replying now three shots to one, increasing in persistency as the range closed. A shrapnel charge burst above the hatches aft, ripping the tarpaulins to shreds and poking great gaping holes in the tube of the steel mast. Bits of metal banged against the deck plates, like gravel on a window pane. The shrapnel was seeking out the lone figure on the platform, who defied all the rules of gunnery and ranging, yet plied the weapon with an air of desper-

ation. Steamers of smoke curled upward from the muzzle and the long barrel still swung.

Maltbie's hat whipped away in the breeze, baring his head, gray and silvery, against the day. Muscles that had twinged for years suddenly grew limber, and sinews showed like cords in his thin wrists. He rubbed sweat from his forehead with a rough coat sleeve. It was like Ladysmith, only different . . . Just what d'you mean by that, you old fool? . . Hurry, hurry!

Another Hun shell coming; nearer this time. Look out! Ah, it was short! . . . Give 'em one back!

The 4.7 roared again, a long pencil of yellow stabbed outward. The shell whined for fifteen hundred yards, nosed down, slapped the water fifty yards from the U-boat's side—and skipped. It struck the conning tower dead on, and a sudden burst of flame and smoke leaped toward the dome of the sky. The group of figures dissolved into an awful smudge. And as the smudge grew, the submarine's gun flickered for the last time.

Maltbie stared at the smoke-swept scene, entranced. Damme, it had happened! Quickly as a summer storm.

But look out, man! That last Hun shell is coming! A shrill whine, a siren; then lower, lower—*whang!* . . .

Oh, God, he couldn't feel anything! Only a salty taste in his mouth; jumping, fiery nerves burning in his chest . . . It was growing dark, very dark . . .

CAPTAIN MAINWARE stood on the *Loriant's* bridge, steering wide for the shoal water off Navesink. The pilot yawl came alongside, and the *Loriant's* man put a cautious foot on the hanging ladder. Off the beam was the low lying Jersey coast. The channel buoys, port and starboard, stretched out ahead, marking the limits to sand bank and shoal; familiar landmarks loomed up through the drift of distant city haze; the fishing boats curtsied in the swell, beckoning the *Loriant* into port to resume the brief round of shore life. The liner's engines turned steadily and she came in from the sea, head up and propellers kicking a creamy froth deep beneath the stern.

Maltbie, in the stateroom below the bridge, opened his eyes wide, and caught at his senses. Slowly he scanned the cabin. The brass lined ports, the white walls, the green carpet, met his glance. Nothing had changed; the sheets were cool about his body. Why, bless him, he was quite alive! Quite! But there was a queer humming in his head, and his ribs were bandaged. He steadied himself and pushed the button on the wall panel. A steward opened the door from the outer room.

"Well, sor, glad to see you awake. I'll be tellin' the captain, sor. He's on the bridge with the pilot."

"Oh, steward—" Surprising how weak the voice!

"Yes, sor?"

"We're in, eh?"

"Yes, sor."

"Ask the captain to bring the newspapers."

Mainware strode into the cabin, bobbing his head to clear the door beam. He slapped the newspaper with an open palm, and chuckled.

"There, my dear chap, is the whole story. Our arrival's reported, you are headlined a hero, the—"

"Tush, man! None o' that. Open the paper to the financial pages, will you? It's there you'll be finding the worth of the story."

The *Times* crackled loudly in the silence of the room.

"Opened," the captain said.

"Now read the sovereign quotation."

"The sovereign—the sovereign—" The captain beetled his brows over the fine print. "Here it is. Why, love me, it's up! Four dollars, seventy-three cents!"

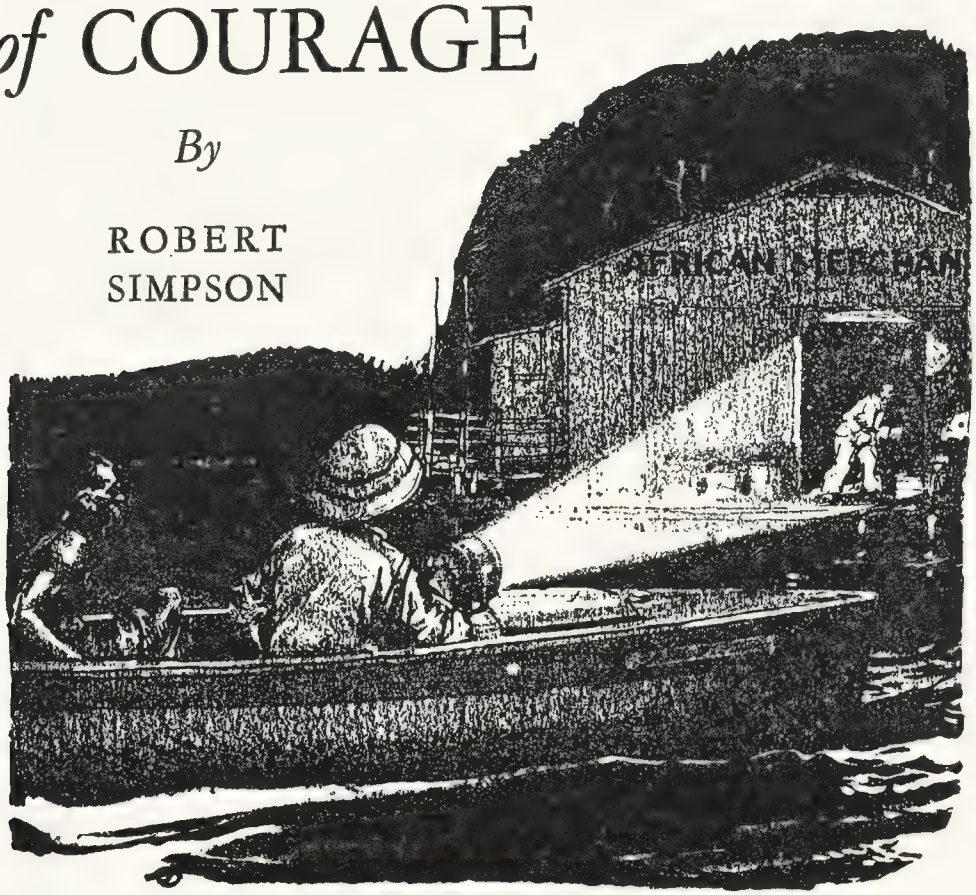
"Ah! four seventy-three. That's all, Captain. Four seventy-three."

Maltbie turned his tired eyes to the wall again and slept.

A LITTLE MATTER of COURAGE

By

ROBERT SIMPSON



CARSDALE had gone quite mad. He was the agent for the African Merchants Company on Bola Creek, and he had suddenly and without warning risen from a sick bed to shoot up his own trading beach, until there was no one left on the place to dispute with him his complete possession.

Although there had been no fatalities, several Kroo-boys and one of Carsdale's two white assistants had been hit during the opening barrage. And the assistant who had been lucky enough to escape with a whole skin had managed to remove his fellow assistant and the wounded Kroo-boys from the premises.

He had then taken them by canoe downriver to Dannatown, where the African Merchants Company held forth on a more ambitious scale than on Bola Creek.

Now, two days later, Carsdale—gaunt, yellow and flaming eyed, still in his pajamas, with a weather battered mushroom sun helmet stuck on the back of his head and a pair of Upper Niger sandals on his feet—paced his own

veranda and scanned the length and breadth of Bola Creek, like the pirate haunted skipper of a frigate on the look-out for the Jolly Roger.

There was nothing much for him to see; nothing save the eternal green curtains of mangroves that hung over both banks of the creek, and a few scattered trade canoes that were bucking the current on their way to the native markets or were drifting to Enson's beach farther downstream.

Carsdale was not interested in the canoes, or in Enson who was the African Merchants Company's only competitor on Bola Creek. Enson was alone down there below the Yedda curve; alone and damned. Carsdale had damned Enson often enough to be quite sure that there was no mistake about it, and he was not giving the man a thought.

Carsdale's immediate and consuming interest was in Kingdon.

He was looking and waiting for Kingdon—for Kingdon who was the new agent-general of the African Merchants Company; Kingdon, who had ordered him invalided home—who had given him his walking papers—who had said he was finished, done for, and must go home and stay there and never come back. Kingdon, who—blast Kingdon! Blast his lousy little hide! He had married a girl for her money—married himself into a big job—into power; the power that, with a gesture, could throw *him* out! Him! Carsdale!

Kingdon had said he was going to send some one up from Warri or Segwanga to relieve him; some one who would step on to his beach, roll him up in blankets, and ship him downriver like a ruddy bale of print cloth!

And some swine from downriver was coming up to hound him from his own beach—his own beach where he had worked and sweated and filled himself chockful of fever for years, ever since the beach had been a beach.

Hadn't he built the ruddy place? Every inch of it? Didn't he know the shipping marks and numbers on every sheet of corrugated iron that had gone into the building of the shop, the house and the stores? Hadn't he selected every pitch pine board, every mangrove stick in the breakwater, every wharf pile—and almost stood guard over every blade of grass in the lawn to keep the sizzling glare of the sun from burning it up?

But the grass had burned up anyway; burned to a sickly yellow-brown—just like himself. Burned out! That's what had happened to him. He had burned himself out while those smug, fat home office czars—czars? Damn them! They were blood-suckers. Blood-suckers!

They drained you dry, burned you out and then they shipped you home rolled in blankets that smelled of sweat and fever, while some young swine from downriver made himself comfortable under your *punkah,* ordered himself a drink, lolled back in your chair and watched you go downriver—out, finished, never to come back!

Carsdale's finger itched on the trigger of his gun, and his wild, flaming eyes suddenly fastened themselves upon a canoe with a grass awning—an eight-paddle canoe that had just shown up around the Yedda curve.

And certainly, in that moment, there was no doubt about the fact that Carsdale was quite mad. Quite. Every one on Bola Creek knew it by this time; that is, every one but Harth, and he could hardly be expected to know because he had just arrived.

He was the "swine" who was going to put Carsdale out.

THE nose of Harth's canoe, swinging round the Yedda curve, straightened and headed for the gig wharf of the African Merchants beach.

Eight paddles rose and fell in rhythmic unison and, under the grass awning upon a comfortable little deck amidships, Harth was stretching his two hundred pounds of red headed manhood in cushioned ease, just as he had done all

the way from Bwallatown.

At Bwallatown he had parted company with the Liverpool freighter that had brought him round from Segwanga, and had come the rest of the way by canoe; and at this moment he was whistling contentedly like a prize linnet—which he had the habit and gift of doing very well—principally because he was going to take over his first job as the full fledged agent in charge of one of the African Merchants Company's trading factories.

This, to Harth, who had served an apprenticeship of nearly six years in the palm oil trade, was not just a bigger and a better job. It was an accolade. And he was deriving considerable satisfaction from the fact that his old boss, Kingdon, had remembered him and had elevated him to knighthood. It was good to think that, after all, Kingdon had not forgotten.

Of course, Harth had always known Kingdon would remember him. Kingdon was that kind of man. No size; just a little man; quiet, inoffensive and unobtrusive as a lizard on a pile of kernels, but with an amazing kind of fearlessness glowing steadily in his eyes; a fearlessness that, upon several occasions, had seemed to border upon suicidal indifference to any kind of consequences.

So Harth, who had had opportunities to know Kingdon as intimately as any man had ever known him, had been quite sure Kingdon would not forget. Marrying the girl who owned a half interest in the African Merchants Company and having thereafter become agent-general for the company had not spoiled the quiet little man in the least.

Why should it? Kingdon deserved what he got: the girl, the money and the big job. Kingdon belonged among the gods, and any one who thought anything to the contrary and said it out loud in Harth's hearing—well, there were two hundred pounds of Harth and every ounce was Kingdon's any time, anywhere.

Thus did this new knight rise from among the squires of the Oil Rivers trade and set his face toward the solemn business of taking over the African Merchants Company's Bola Creek trading factory.

Carsdale waited for him.

And Carsdale was no longer pacing the house veranda. He was now standing on the gig wharf with his gun behind his back, waiting for Harth's canoe to come near enough to minimize the chance of any mistake.

No one else on Bola Creek paid any attention to Harth's canoe—not until it was definitely heading in toward the African Merchants gig wharf. Then every eye on the river watched Harth's canoe, every voice gave tongue to a shout of warning, and every paddle blade stabbed faster and faster into the waters of Bola Creek to get out of all possible danger as quickly as possible.

Harth's canoe boys paused, bewildered. Their paddles suddenly hung in listless inaction and they began to chatter among themselves. Harth had stopped whistling and was sitting among his cushions taking a good look at the lonely figure on the gig wharf and also allowing his eyes to stray all over the beach front in search of some evidence of life and motion.

There was none. Not a single canoe alongside the mangrove-stick breakwater—not a single native on the beach, not even a Kroo-boy; no one at all except the lonely figure in white on the gig wharf.

Carsdale? It couldn't be. Carsdale was in bed probably running a high temperature; and one of Harth's first jobs was to see to it that Carsdale was shipped downriver and put on board a mail steamer for home. Those were Kingdon's orders; and Kingdon had added that Carsdale, poor devil, had such a bad liver that— Why, what in Hades? It *was* Carsdale! And there was something in Carsdale's right hand—something—a gun, by thunder!

Harth's sun helmet, resting on the

little deck of the canoe among the cushions, lifted sharply, spun on its rim, then rolled in a tired kind of way into the water.

The canoe boys, not at all tired evidently, made eight frantic dives sound almost as one, and Harth, his lips slightly parted, his popping blue eyes gaping in amaze, heard the song of Carsdale's second bullet whine in his ears and knew that he was alone.

There was a third bullet and a fourth, a vague, confused crackling of shots, as the canoe, in the grip of the swift running current, spun like a lazy top and headed on a wabbling course downstream.

Voices, more vague than the shots, shrieked in bedlam all about Harth; voices that told him to dive into the water and swim for it; voices that told him that Carsdale was "craze."

Crazy? Mad? Carsdale?

Harth glanced at the figure on the gig wharf—glanced up at the house veranda over the shop—the agent's end of it; then he glanced down at his right trousers leg and saw the jagged hole the fourth bullet had made.

There was no blood. No pain. So, perhaps . . .

Carsdale emptied his gun in Harth's direction and furiously began to reload. The canoe rocked and rolled in the lap of the current and Harth, flat upon his face among the cushions, rocked and rolled too. His red head rested on a faded yellow cushion and seemed to be dyeing it a deeper red than his hair.

"Blast you!" Carsdale shrieked. "Blast you! Keep off my beach!"

Harth did not hear him; neither did he see the gnarled wet hands that now gripped the gunwale of the canoe on the offshore side of it.

"You done die?" A canoe boy whispered hoarsely. "He done kill you propah daid?"

Harth did not say. He sprawled upon his face, rocking with the motion of the canoe and the deep red stain on the faded cushion spread wider and wider.

PRESENTLY more bullets hissed around the stern of the canoe and Carsdale shrieked the louder because the range was momentarily becoming too long. In a little while Carsdale's voice and his bullets had drifted safely astern, and most of the canoe boys, whispering awesomely among themselves, climbed back into the canoe.

Less than half an hour later, with the red ball of the sun dropping like a plummet below the eternal ring of mangroves, Harth was being carried up the gravel path from Enson's tumbledown breakwater to Enson's wattle roofed bungalow; and still later, with a standlamp shedding its doubtful, moth clouded light upon his face, Harth's red head, swathed in bandages, was resting upon a pillow on Enson's bed.

Enson—lean, gray, unshaven, and about as hospitable normally as any wolf—was standing beside the bed looking down upon his patient and growling his disgust with all that belonged or pertained to the African Merchants Company.

"You fellows steal my business—starve me out with your damned price wars, and then send your ruddy cripples down to me for patchin'."

Enson paused for a reply, received none, and proceeded on another tack.

"Why didn't you get out of the canoe when Carsdale started shooting? Afraid you'd get wet? A hell of an agent you'll make for that bunch of cutthroats!"

Harth's blue eyes were wide open and he heard and understood every word that Enson had to stay. He knew now—because Enson had told him so—that he would probably carry a scar above his left ear for the remainder of his life; but he was not seriously hurt. The bullet hole in his trousers leg was just a bullet hole and nothing more and, though he was still rather dazed, he was conscious enough to wonder why he had not shown as much sense as any of his eight paddle boys.

"The canoe boys tell me," Enson went on, "that you sat gaping at Carsdale and his gun like a raw first-timer at his first *juju* play palaver. What was the matter with you? Or don't you know enough to duck when somebody starts throwing things at you?"

"Huh," Harth grunted. "I don't know. Maybe I was thinking of something else."

"Something else! You're crazier than Carsdale! What else is there to think about when bullets start coming your way?"

Harth glanced at the moth clouded lamp, and then tried lifting his head from the pillow. That hurt, and his head jangled like a discordant blare of brass. So he waited awhile and tried to think what it was he had been thinking about when Carsdale had opened fire.

Kingdon. The little man who belonged among the gods; who walked into danger with his eyes wide open, looked the damned thing—whatever it was—straight in the face and never ducked. Kingdon, who had not forgotten; who had given him this chance—given him orders to take over the job of agent in charge of the Bola Creek factory.

"I've got to get up," Harth said abruptly and, before Enson could stop him, he was sitting on the edge of the bed watching the standlamp whirl around like a pinwheel of light.

"You nut!" Enson protested. "Stay where you are! If that head of yours busts open again I'll charge you for a new roll of bandage cloth." Then almost gently—gently for Enson, that is—"Steady, you ruddy shark. I know you're going to hate like hell to owe me anything, so if it'll make you feel better, I'll send the bill to Kingdon." Enson laughed. "He certainly married himself into a nice fat billet, didn't he?"

"Shut up!"

Harth was on his feet and Enson was backing away from the sudden light in Harth's blue eyes.

"Kingdon's the whitest—oh, go to hell! Why should I defend Kingdon to you! Where are my uniform cases?"

Enson mechanically indicated two black lacquered, airtight uniform cases, more familiarly known as cabin trunks, that occupied a place against the wall beside an ancient mahogany dresser.

"Where are you going? What are you going to do?"

Harth did not answer. He lurched toward the uniform cases and, gripping the handles of the one on top, tried to lift it down so that he could gain access to the one beneath.

"Here! Wait! You can't—you ruddy fool!"

Harth reeled and swayed, but managed to keep his feet until the topmost uniform case was safely on the floor. Then he sat down on it and waited for the room and Enson and the standlamp to stop whirling in a furious series of circles. Enson stood beside Harth and put a lean, yellowed hand upon his shoulder.

"Better get back to bed. I know how it is. The company you work for has been lousy ever since the MacBeth brothers died, and Kingdon isn't big enough to build it up again. But I don't hold that against—"

"You're a liar! And you're talking through your hat. Kingdon's big enough for any job. He's white. He never forgets his friends and he'll go through any kind of hell without batting an eye just to keep the faith of a paddle boy who believes in him. I know him and—"

"And he sent you up here to take over from Carsdale—a man who's been going crazy by the minute for months!"

Harth's head jerked upward painfully and the room swam again.

"Kingdon didn't know it."

"Carsdale's assistants knew it. I've known it for at least six months."

"You knew Carsdale would start shooting up his beach?"

Enson hedged.

"Something like that. Better get back to bed before—"

"That's different," Harth grunted and

searched his trousers pockets for his keys. "Lots of 'em get loose in the upper story out here, but they don't take to guns." Harth turned and inserted a key in the lock of the uniform case against the wall. "I haven't used this blunderbuss of mine since—"

"You mean you're going after Carsdale with a gun? Tonight?"

"Now. Know anybody I can hire a canoe from for the evening?"

"You're crazy!"

"So is Carsdale. That makes us even."

IT HAD taken Harth's paddle boys, in the late afternoon, something less than half an hour to drop down with the current from the African Merchants beach to Enson's. It took Harth nearly two hours to make the same distance upstream.

Paddling one's own canoe is not a white man's work in the creeks of the Niger Delta, and though Harth was waterman enough to keep his flimsy craft right side up at all times, he knew, before he had gone even a quarter of the way to the African Merchants beach, that he should never have made the attempt at all.

His head throbbed, sometimes as if there were a trip hammer inside it, sometimes as if a heavy sledge were pounding his temples, slowly but surely beating him down and down into a blessed state of unconsciousness. Every upward movement of his arms lifted the sledge on high and every downward movement brought it thudding down, making him sway uncertainly on the canoe's narrow little seat, while pinwheels and whirligigs spun crazily before his eyes.

Every little while he paused to be quite sure his eyes actually were capable of seeing anything at all with any sort of reliability; then, convinced that he was still in possession of most of his senses, he went on again.

Kingdon had ordered him to take over the Bola Creek factory and he was going to do it. He knew Kingdon was not aware of Carsdale's homicidal mania; and, in any event, this had nothing to do with the case—that is, it was no excuse for not carrying out Kingdon's orders. It was just his, Harth's, bad luck to run into a snag of the kind.

Life was full of snags of one sort or another and you took care of them wherever and whenever you happened to find them. This was Kingdon's own way of doing things. He never dealt in evasions or excuses, or asked any one to do anything he would not do himself.

This was why Harth had elected to make the little journey upriver alone instead of having some paddle boys do his paddling for him. Even if he might have found paddle boys willing to undertake a job of the kind, he did not feel that it would be fair to ask any paddle boy to risk his life in the unorthodox business of subduing and shipping a crazy man downriver.

No, this was his, Harth's, own particular responsibility. His alone. And all the way upstream, damning his uncertain head and the even more uncertain swirl of the swift running current, Harth assured himself over and over again that Enson had been a swine to suggest that Kingdon would send any man deliberately into danger.

"Enson's a hound anyway," Harth told himself mumblingly. "And when I've sent Carsdale downriver I'll pay him for his damned bandage cloth."

Harth decided to pay Enson for the bandage cloth many times on his way up to the African Merchants beach; and just as often decided not to. Enson was all right. He just didn't know any better, and there was no need to rub it in by insulting him with a check for the bandage cloth. Enson just didn't understand Kingdon, or that Kingdon's marriage to Annette MacBeth—half owner of the African Merchants Company—was the climax to as genuine a romance as ever led up to the door of any preacher anywhere.

Harth knew. Hadn't he, with his own

eyes, seen Kingdon rescue the girl from one of the lousiest conspiracies any helpless heroine ever . . .

"Gawd! My head!"

Harth's paddle drooped and through the whirligigs and pinwheels he vaguely made out something or other that stuck out into Bola Creek; something like an open barn door that swung back and forth—then sort of folded up and unrolled again, folded up and unrolled, only to start swinging back and forth—back and forth.

Harth felt a little sick. He knew the thing was not a barn door. It was too big for that and too little to be any kind of trees, except wine palms, and Harth knew it was not a cluster of wine palms, because wine palms never could achieve that square cut look; and besides . . .

Something whined past Harth's head accompanied by a vicious crackling report that cleared his uncertain vision and jerked him to life in a moment.

"What the—good Lord! Carsdale!"

Harth's drooping paddle stabbed at the water in sudden frantic haste and he headed for the "barn door" because it was the only thing in sight that even vaguely suggested cover. He could not see Carsdale and even the rapid succession of shots that immediately followed did not tell him where Carsdale was.

Dimly now, however, with his senses forced into activity, Harth could distinguish one of the storehouses on the African Merchants beach and, beyond it and above it, the dim light of a lamp. He suspected that the storehouse, because of its nearness to the waterfront, was the kernel store, and he assumed the lamp to be a standlamp in the white man's living quarters above the trading shop.

But the "barn door" had developed into the main wharf before Harth's uncertain eyes told him that Carsdale was shooting from behind a barricade of empty oil casks that had been rolled along the runway to the wharf's edge.

Harth was paddling furiously into the teeth of Carsdale's fire before he realized where the bullets were coming from; and when he did realize this, it was too late to turn back. So he drove straight ahead. With the muzzle of Carsdale's gun viciously spitting death at him, he made his light shell of a canoe leap for the shelter of the wharf piles like a suddenly animated jackrabbit.

"The ruddy fool! He slings bullets around like—hell!"

Harth's canoe slipped between two rows of ironwood wharf piles without any help from Harth. His paddle was gone and his good left arm with it; that is, his left arm hung numbly at his side while the paddle floated off somewhere in the dark, leaving Harth hugging a wharf pile that was slippery, slimy and green.

"Lord!" Harth muttered fervently, leaning his singing head against the wharf pile. "What a nut I am! What a nut! Carsdale's as sane as a chief justice compared with me."

The calmer reflection of the succeeding few minutes did not alter Harth's opinion of himself. With a head that clattered like a boiler shop and with the kind of vision that was in no way dependable, he had tried to invade territory that was altogether new to him so that he might capture and subdue a madman to whom every inch of this territory was as familiar as the back of his hand.

And in the dark or in the light of day Carsdale could shoot and hit. There was no mistake about this. Harth's limp left arm gave added testimony to the effectiveness of Carsdale's markmanship and Harth was afraid that one more bombardment . . .

"This is no way to take over a factory," he grunted, still hugging the slimy green wharf pile. "No way at all. If Kingdon ever gets wind of this—"

"Blast you! Come out of there! You sneakin', skulkin' rat! Come out from under my wharf!"

Carsdale's voice squealed and rasped like a cross grained file and, in a sudden

frenzy of maniacal fury, he began pumping bullets into the wharf overhead.

Harth held his breath and hoped the wharf was a good one—all over. Some trading beach wharves, as he knew, were not very good in spots. Most of them had loose and broken planks that could be pried loose and lifted up without much difficulty and some of them had gaping open spaces through which a madman with a gun could readily shoot and, among the clutter of wharf piles below, perhaps find the target he was hoping to hit.

Therefore Harth peered upward in search of a trace of light. He found none. Every plank and every tenpenny nail in the wharf seemed to be as tightly and snugly in place as if the factory's Accra carpenter had just picked up his tools after completing a thorough and expensive repair job.

So Harth, with many thunders in his ears, and his head apparently swimming about in space searching for a pillow, waited a little while till Carsdale's fury passed and his own grip upon realities became more sure. The only realities Harth could count on just then were the canoe in which he sat and the slimy green wharf pile that felt comfortingly cool when he leaned his forehead against it.

His right hand, it was true, touched the butt of his revolver, but he knew he could not use the weapon against Carsdale. Carsdale was sick. Sick in the head. And Kingdon would not want him hurt. Harth realized this now and knew he should have realized it before he left Enson's beach. Even shooting Carsdale in self-defense—no, Kingdon would not like that. It was not Kingdon's way. If Kingdon were handling this thing, he would—

THE long, wailing scream of a launch's siren cut the black silence of Bola Creek as with a knife.

"Kingdon!" Harth whispered the name as if he were afraid of it, and had no doubt at all about the siren's being that of the African Merchants launch *Sandpiper*. "Hell! He mustn't find me here—caught like a rat in a trap."

There was quiet now overhead. Carsdale's frenzy had passed and Harth could almost see the madman staring out at the river, searching for the *Sandpiper* in the dark. And Harth was quite sure Carsdale had recognized the *Sandpiper's* siren and was just as sure that Kingdon was on board.

Undoubtedly Kingdon had heard of Carsdale's outbreak of two days before and had come around to Bola Creek as fast as the *Sandpiper* would carry him to take care of Carsdale's case himself and to prevent Harth from sticking his head into danger.

"It's my job," Harth muttered, while his head swam and a cold sweat of nausea broke out all over him. "My job. What's he getting into it for? Making that ruddy siren scream like—"

Again the *Sandpiper's* siren told Harth that Kingdon was coming right along and, when Harth peered out between the wharf piles and tried to penetrate the blackness downriver, he thought he saw the *Sandpiper's* searchlight moving back and forth as if in search of something specific that it expected to find somewhere in the shadow of the mangroves on the upriver bank of the creek.

Harth could not be sure of this. He could not be sure of anything except that he was very sick and very tired. Two hours of paddling, plus a bad head and a left arm that hung like a dead thing at his side, had had their own very decided effects upon him.

"Damn my stomach," he grumbled, and tried to see the shifting light more surely. "My stomach's no good. Never was any good. It's my weakest—huh! That's a searchlight all right. Looking for something. Looking — for — that ruddy searchlight's looking for me! Let me get out of here."

Without a paddle this was not easy, not when he had inched the canoe along

from wharf pile to wharf pile until the slim craft's nose was pointing downstream and he was hanging on to one of the outermost wharf piles, trying to make up his mind where Carsdale was and why the *Sandpiper* seemed to have slowed up. The launch's searchlight, too, was no longer searching the shadow of the bush. It was flicking the midstream swell not unlike a trout fisher casting a fly.

Harth watched the light a moment or two, peered at the racing swirl of the current, then glanced upward toward the wharf's edge and hoped Carsdale was too much interested in the *Sandpiper* to be too closely interested in him.

There was no sound above Harth's head. Not even the whisper of Carsdale's sandaled feet pacing to and fro. Just then the lapping of the water against the wharf piles was like distant gun shots; and Harth knew that when he shoved off he was relegating himself to the mercy of the Bola Creek current at high tide and to a probable third bombardment from Carsdale's gun.

But he was doing the only thing he could do to try to prevent Kingdon from getting all shot up and he'd be damned if he was going to let that nosey searchlight find him cooped up like a prize exhibit under Carsdale's wharf. Whoever heard of a trading agent taking over a factory that way? Why, they'd laugh at him from Sierre Leone to St. Paul de Loando and—

Harth shoved off.

It was a good shove and the swift running Bola, curling in behind the canoe's tail, whisked Harth off on his little journey with chance; a little journey that might at once be both the shortest and the longest he would ever take.

He crouched as low as he could and would have lain flat in the bottom of the canoe, but his left arm seemed to get in the way of much movement of any sort—particularly in a craft that threatened to turn keel upward at any moment.

In something less than thirty seconds Harth lived something more than thirty years. Behind and above him was silence—a silence that made him hold his breath waiting for the sound of a shot. And then as the canoe, caught in a particularly tricky swirl of the current, bobbed and spun like a cork, the *Sandpiper's* siren screamed once more as if in demoniacal defiance of the sudden rain of bullets that hissed nastily into the creek upon either side of the canoe.

"Does that fathead never run out of ammunition?" Harth grumbled and wondered whether he would rather be shot than drowned. Certainly the antics of the canoe made a precipitate bath a very imminent possibility, and if the worst came to the worst—

A sharp and blinding light struck Harth full between the eyes, a whining hum filled his ears, and then the roar of waters closed all about him like the thunders of many waterfalls.

The blinding light went out. The song of the bullets droned off into silence. The canoe, keel upward, whirled and spun more crazily than ever, and Harth's bandage wrapped head followed it.

Behind him there was laughter, shrill and wild as the skirl of a pibroch; and almost immediately ahead the shadowy figures of three Kroo-boys poised like sculptures on the rail of the *Sandpiper.*

But Harth did not hear the laughter, or see the *Sandpiper,* or the Kroo-boys, or the quiet little man who stood on the deck behind them.

"Be all right," the little man said presently, and hoped it was. "Go catch um."

ABOUT an hour later Harth lay on a bench-like seat in the *Sandpiper's* little cabin wrapped in blankets. The launch was tied up to Enson's wharf, Harth's head was swathed in new and clean bandage cloth, and his left arm, also smothered in bandages, reposed in a sling. Three straight brandies had induced his unruly stomach to see reason and they had also taken most of the

blur out of his eyes.

Beside him, on a camp chair, sat the little man who had given the Kroo-boys orders to pick him out of the water; and behind the little man, smoking a sawed-off briar, was Enson. Enson, for the seventh or eighth time, had just come in and this time seemed determined to make a finished business of relieving his mind.

"I told him he was crazy," he said to the back of Kingdon's unmoving head. "All of you sharks go crazy, sooner or later. But, anyhow, just as I said before, I sent some boys after him in a canoe and—"

"They followed him till Carsdale started shooting," Kingdon interposed. "You said that before too. Then they ducked. And I'm not to blame them for that because you'd have ducked too. All right. What—"

"Certainly I'd have ducked. Anybody would. But *that* lunatic—huh!" Enson indicated Harth with his stub of a pipe. "Better ship him home and let Carsdale stay where he is. Of the two of 'em . . . " Enson paused there as if his disgust overwhelmed him. Then he broke out again, "Well, are you going to stay tied up to my wharf all night? What do you think I'm running here? An asylum or a hospital or what? If I have to mess around with more iodine patching up your ruddy cripples—look at my hands. That lousy stuff's ruined one of my best bed sheets and one of my best shirts, and—"

"It is messy," the little man agreed mildly. "Why don't you sit down and be comfortable? There's some very good brandy in that bottle over there."

"I don't drink with sharks."

"No?"

"No! How often do I have to tell you anything to—"

"Did you say that before?"

"You know ruddy well I said it before. Three times since you showed up here; and now I'm telling you and your lunatics to get out and stay out. I don't want Carsdale coming down here slinging bullets around my beach."

The little man nodded solemnly.

"That's an idea, Enson. And since you dislike messing around with iodine —How do you feel now, Harth?"

Harth grinned a pale and sheepish grin. His head and his arm throbbed as with twin toothaches, but this was reason for self-congratulation, since those pains were the song of life.

"I'm all right," he said and his grin broadened. "But Enson's giving you good advice when he tells you to ship me home instead of Carsdale."

"You bet I am!" said Enson.

"But," Harth went on, "don't pay attention to anything else he says. He likes to be sour, and he's getting a great kick out of insulting you. Stick alongside the wharf as long as you like, and let him have the time of his life."

Kingdon turned his head and looked up at Enson.

"May I leave Harth here with you while I go up and get Carsdale? Or must I take him with me?"

"Eh?" Enson gaped and Harth exploded:

"That's my job! I'll be all right in a couple of minutes and I'm not—"

"It's your job to take over the factory," the little man said very evenly and there was a look in his eyes that Harth understood only too well; a quiet, fixed, altogether unhurried look that was already set in Carsdale's direction. "But it's my job as agent-general of the company to remove the present incumbent. That's why I am here. Otherwise I wouldn't have presumed to interfere. I hope you understand that."

Harth floundered and said nothing, principally because he knew there was nothing for him to say. Not when Kingdon talked like that. Kingdon had a way of putting things.

Enson laughed and the sound had no mirth in it.

"Sounds big," he conceded, and laughed again on a slightly lower key. "But let's see you do it. Carsdale doesn't give a *bicuba* how little or how

big they are. He shoots 'em all."

"Evidently."

"And he doesn't ever miss. Not by much."

"Shut up, Enson!" Harth broke in sharply.

"What's the matter?" Enson asked and peered at Kingdon. "You getting nervous? You don't look nervous to me, but Harth knows you better than—"

"You're wrong, Enson," Kingdon said and rose. "I'm so nervous I can hardly stand up. But if you'll be good enough to let me put Harth up in your bungalow till I get back, I'll do something for you some time."

"Yes, you will. You'll take my ruddy beach and my business away from me some time if I give you half a chance." Then Enson shrugged his shoulders with sour fatalism. "But I'll put him up. And he isn't so sick that he can't look after things for me a couple of hours. I haven't been away from this beach in a month of Sundays."

"Where are *you* going?"

"With you, little man. I've heard a lot about you and I want to see how much of you is true. Call your Kroo-boys and have them cart that lunatic ashore. Then we'll make a start."

"Hell!" Harth roared in sudden desperate protest. "I'm not going to be left behind. It's my factory!"

"It will be," Kingdon said quietly, "when Carsdale's been removed." Then to Enson, "You can come along, if you like, but only as a spectator. Understand?"

"You bet. I'm not crazy. I know when to duck."

"All right. There's some very good brandy in that bottle over there."

"It should be good after all your bragging. Call your Kroo-boys while I get me a drink and I'll show 'em where to put him."

Kingdon smiled at Harth and moved to the cabin companion to call the Kroo-boys. Harth groaned in spirit and there was a look of tragic desperation in his eyes as he watched Enson pour three fingers of brandy into a glass.

"Chin-chin," Enson said and drank. "You're lucky you're alive. And don't forget—if I find anybody's pinched anything while I'm gone I'll send you a bill."

Then the Kroo-boys came and took Harth away and put him in a Madeira chair on the screened veranda of Enson's bungalow.

Harth had not shed a tear in twenty years. But as he watched the *Sandpiper* slip away from the wharf and head into the blackness upriver a large salty blob squeezed its way out of each eye.

"Damn my stomach!" he sobbed in silence all by himself, and the silence of the mangrove bound jungle throbbed in reply. "If I had any guts at all . . . "

THE *Sandpiper*, trailing a canoe in her wake, headed upriver in midstream only for a little while. Her lights were dimmed and presently, veering toward the far bank of the creek, she hugged the shadow of the mangroves until she had slipped past the feeble and solitary light that still shone in Carsdale's living quarters.

"What's the idea?" Enson asked of the little man at his side. "That's Carsdale's beach over there where the light is."

"So I see," Kingdon said, and murmured an order to a Kroo-boy who transmitted it to the launch's black engineer. "And I think that must be Carsdale himself moving back and forth on the veranda in front of the light. Do you see him?"

"Just about," Enson agreed when he had peered in the direction indicated. "Anyway, there's somebody on that veranda who's very restless, so I imagine it must be Carsdale. But what are you trying to do?"

"That poor devil must be about ready to collapse," Kingdon interrupted quietly. "He probably hasn't slept at all in at least three days."

"Huh. You're not betting on that, are you?"

"Just a little," Kingdon admitted, as the launch began to swing in a wide curve, obviously with the intention of approaching Carsdale's beach from an upriver direction—a direction Carsdale would not be likely to expect. "A man as sick as Carsdale is can not live on his nerve forever. And I'm principally afraid he may hurt himself in a last effort to escape being sent home."

Enson's laugh was short.

"Is that why you're sneaking in on him like this? So you won't scare him into shooting himself?"

"Something like that."

"Seems to me that's a good way to prevent him from having a chance to shoot you."

"I hope so. Dubla!"

One of the three Kroo-boys who had fished Harth out of Bola Creek earlier in the evening came out of the shadows of the afterdeck and stood at Kingdon's side.

Even for a Kroo-boy, most of whom were built for the hard labor of the palm oil trading beaches, Dubla was an unusually big and powerful black, who dwarfed Kingdon almost to the point of absurdity. And from Dubla's right forearm there hung a coil of rope.

Kingdon glanced at the rope and nodded.

"Everything be all right. All be sof'ly, sof'ly. No fight palaver. Mas' Carsdale be sick man. Sick for him head. *Savez?*"

"I *savez*, sah. I *savez* dis palaver long time."

"But Mas' Carsdale make plenty shoot palaver," Kingdon warned. "Suppose he look you he go shoot one time!"

Dubla grinned.

"He no go look me. I *savez* dis palaver. You fixum light. We catchum Mas' Carsdale."

"Light?" Enson asked sharply. "What light?"

Kingdon smiled.

"You're just a spectator, Enson. Watch." Then to Dubla as the launch scraped the mangroves at the upper and darkest end of the African Merchants beach, "All right, Dubla. You fit to go now. And 'membah. No fight palaver."

"Yessah."

"And keep your eye out for gun all time."

"Yessah."

Dubla vanished over the rail and his two companions followed like dumb wraiths who seemed to be attached to Dubla by an invisible string. All three clambered ashore and, just barely visible even to Kingdon, disappeared into the shrouded blackness of a path that would lead them around to the rear of two warehouses, and finally into the screening shadows of three water tanks, one of which adjoined the stairway leading down from Carsdale's quarters to the beach.

Dubla knew those water tanks. Upon other and more pleasant occasions, when he had been one of the beach gang on Carsdale's beach, he had painted them several times. Now those three water tanks, when Carsdale came down stairs as he was sure to do sooner or later, would give birth to three black wraiths with a rope.

Of course, as Dubla was well aware, this simple and hopeful plan might easily miscarry. Carsdale was sick. Sick in the head. There was no saying what a sick man like that was likely to do next. But Dubla knew the ground and he knew Carsdale; and when the light began to shine . . . Dubla grinned and led his two companions with cat-like silence toward the water tanks.

Kingdon, on board the *Sandpiper*, did not even smile. He was very quiet and very thoughtful as he gave an order to the launch's engineer to bring the *Sandpiper* about and head upriver again.

"You have more sense than I gave you credit for," Enson said with a sharp edge of sarcasm in his tone. "Where are you going now?"

"Back to where we came from."

"My beach!"

"Not quite," as the *Sandpiper* reversed her former maneuver and began to swing toward the opposite bank and head downstream. "We're supposed to be downriver, you know, and when we make our official approach we must come from a downriver direction."

"Official approach? You're not going to let that crazy man know you're coming after him?"

"I'm afraid so. If he expects us, he won't expect Dubla and his friends. At least, I hope not."

"Us! Hell! I'd be safer with those Kroo-boys. You saw what he did to Harth and that other assistant of yours to say nothing of the Kroo-boys I patched up and sent downriver. You said you stopped at Dannatown on the way up, didn't you?"

"Yes, I stopped at Dannatown," Kingdon said and moved forward to fuss with the searchlight—a small but powerful light that was set in gimbals to the right of the wheel. Enson followed and Kingdon added, "You and Jonah should be all right in the cabin."

"Jonah? Him?" Enson indicated the black engineer.

Kingdon nodded.

"He's the unluckiest black man in these rivers, but the best engineer of them all. When you get him alone in the cabin, ask him to tell you about some of his experiences. You'll find them very entertaining."

"What are you going to do with that light?" Enson interrupted nervously.

"Use it."

"But the ruddy thing won't be any use beyond gunshot. What are you planning to do? Give Carsdale a target to shoot at?"

Kingdon did not answer this; but as he adjusted the lamp and swung it up and down and around to be sure it was working easily, it was obvious to Enson that whoever chose to operate that light within range of Carsdale's gun would be exposing himself to the gravest kind of danger. Then Enson glanced toward Carsdale's living quarters above the African Merchants trading shop and immediately gripped Kingdon's arm.

"Look! Carsdale's light's gone out! Now we don't know where he is. Do you think he spotted us landing those Kroo-boys of yours?"

Kingdon looked in the direction where Carsdale's light should have been and continued to look in that direction as the *Sandpiper* completed her maneuver and once more swung about to approach the African Merchants beach just as if she had come directly from a downriver direction.

"I hardly think he saw us land the Kroo-boys," Kingdon said after a while. "But he may have seen us making the turn, though I doubt it. Better get into the cabin now and hold Jonah down. He always gets nervous when I presume to take the wheel." Then to Jonah quietly, "All right, Jonah. Make siren talk plenty loud, then go for cabin with Mas' Enson. *Savez?*"

Jonah hesitated.

"You go take wheel, sah?"

"Yes. I'll take the wheel."

Jonah still hesitated and looked toward the *Sandpiper's* bows where twin fans of spray were leaping high and wide as she sliced her way nearer and nearer to the menace of Carsdale and his guns.

"Dis *Sandpiper* no be so-so launch, sah," he suggested hopefully. "Dis *Sandpiper* be good launch. Maybe so I besser look out foh wheel palaver, sah."

Kingdon smiled.

"Trouble live, Jonah. Plenty shoot palaver. Go for cabin one time."

"Ye—yessah," Jonah said and, reluctantly relinquishing the wheel to Kingdon, made the siren "talk plenty loud"—a shrill wail of agony that was the voice of Jonah's harrowed soul.

"Good Lord!" Enson breathed hoarsely, and crouched beside the cabin companion while Jonah shuffled slowly but obediently below. "Now you've done it! Even without the light—and if he starts using a Winchester, we're through!"

Again the siren screamed and the *Sandpiper* sprang toward the black shadows of the African Merchants beach, like a government headquarters mail launch that wanted all the world to know that the mails were in.

Enson crouched still lower, but moved nearer to Kingdon.

"Might as well commit suicide," he growled. "Carsdale can shoot like hell and even if he is crazy and nervous, he can't miss."

A SUDDEN lean stream of blinding light shot toward the beach ahead and struck the main wharf, revealing a string of empty oil casks and flooding the blackness under the kernel store awning. Then, playing a moment or two on wharf and river front, it sprang upward in search of the house veranda and Carsdale. And found neither.

It missed the house altogether and, climbing between the kernel store and the oil yard, flung a swath of light into the topmost branches of a mango tree. But only for an instant. Sharply and suddenly Kingdon shut it off and in the blackness that followed the *Sandpiper's* siren wailed its eery, agonizing cry while the launch plunged straight into the teeth of whatever Carsdale had to offer.

"What are you trying to do?" Enson whispered nervously. "Make him crazier than he is?"

"No. Just trying to get him to concentrate on something other than my Kroo-boys. Better get below. This light's going on again in less than half a minute, and—"

The crackling sound of a shot, sharp and angry, and the nasty chug of a bullet burying itself into a little pile of tarpaulin just a few feet forward of the wheel, put a period upon Kingdon's suggestion. But while Enson swore and crouched still lower the little man said quietly:

"That's better. And I think that came from somewhere near the gig wharf. Let's see."

The speed of the launch slowed down, but the siren screamed just as fearsomely —screamed and screamed again in a riot of sound that tore the jungle silence to shreds until a shaft of light raked the African Merchants mangrove stick breakwater in search of the gig wharf.

It found the gig wharf. But not Carsdale.

"Shut the damned light off!" Enson growled. "Do you want—"

The spiteful crackle of a rifle shot was followed by the faint hum of a bullet traveling overhead.

"The siren bothered him," Kingdon said simply, releasing the searchlight and sending another eery wail trailing off into silence, as the launch slowed almost to a stop. "And the light gets into the corners of his eyes no matter where he is. He can't keep his eyes away from it because he's afraid of it. Afraid it will find him." Kingdon reached toward the light again. "I think he's somewhere along the breakwater."

Still another shot and another; wild shots evidently, that registered nowhere on the *Sandpiper,* while the blinding, searching light crept along the breakwater until it struck a clump of cactus and lime hedge—struck this and brought forth a sudden shriek of human agony and fear that made the cry of the *Sandpiper's* siren seem hollow and false by comparison.

"God!" Enson breathed. "Look!"

Kingdon was looking. His eyes were quiet as always, but his lips were pale and tightly compressed as he held the light full upon the clump of cactus—full upon the gaunt figure of a man in pajamas—a man whose arms were wrapped tightly about his eyes as he floundered blindly and pitifully to escape the light; the shivering, whimpering wreck of a man who tried to turn and run.

Carsdale did run a little way.

And relentlessly the light followed him —gripped him—brought him down in the middle of the lawn and pinned him there; pinned him to the burned and yellow grass that was the shriveled mem-

ory of Carsdale's dreams.

When Dubla and his companions converged suddenly upon him and presently signaled to Kingdon that their work was done, Kingdon shut off the light with a snap.

"If you'll get Jonah to take the wheel," he said quietly to Enson, "I think I'll have a drink."

Jonah appeared suddenly at Kingdon's elbow, his normally tragic face almost guilty of a grin.

"Yessah, I come, sah. You *savez* fixum palaver too much, sah."

"Thanks, Jonah. Take her 'longside wharf. Come on, Enson. You'd like a drink, too, wouldn't you?" He turned and regarded the other man gravely.

Enson's hand fumbled up to his hat and removed it with a gesture that had a quaver in its make-up.

"After you, little man. It's your liquor and it's your launch—but after you, anyway."

Later, with Carsdale safely in bed and two Kroo-boys on guard, Kingdon sent Dubla down to Enson's beach in the *Sandpiper* to fetch Harth, and Enson went along.

While Enson was being rushed downriver at express speed he stood beside the searchlight swinging it up and down and around and mumbling to himself. Finally he shook his head rather hopelessly and walked to the rail; and when he reached his own beach he met Harth's shout of anxious inquiry with a noncommittal grunt. But Harth, struggling to his feet, persisted:

"What happened? Where's Kingdon? Why isn't he with you?"

"He's holding down your job for you. Get to hell out of here."

"He got him!"

Enson growled an order to Dubla to remove Harth's uniform cases and Harth laughed, even though his head sang with the effort.

"Goodby, Enson. You're all right. Come up and have a drink with me some time."

"Edge, you lunatic! Get off my beach!"

"Didn't I tell you that little man was a wonder? Didn't I?"

Enson grunted and sat down. Harth began to whistle like a linnet and turned his face toward the wharf and the *Sandpiper*. Before he had gone more than a few steps Enson asked sharply—

"How did you learn to do that?"

"Do what?" Harth asked and paused.

"Whistle like that."

"I didn't learn. I just do it."

"Huh." A pause. "Could you whistle 'The Two Grenadiers' or 'The Last Rose of Summer' like that?"

"Why not?"

A still longer pause.

"When you're feeling better," Enson said in an unusually low voice, "I'd like to hear 'em."

"Fine. I'll come down."

"Say chin-chin to the little man again for me, will you?"

"Certainly. Good night, Enson, and good luck."

"Good luck, son."

Harth's chin jerked up a little then and, without any help, he passed on down the beach and boarded the *Sandpiper*, whistling softly to himself.

FULL MOON TIDE

By CAPTAIN RAABE

A FANTASTIC tale of fabulous wealth in the form of pearl mussel shell and birds' nests—which the Chinese value so highly as a food—told us by Tom Hawley, a derelict we picked up on the Sydney waterfront, led the bark *Emma P.* to the island of Vanua Lava. I, nicknamed All-Hands, went in her as second mate, under Mac, skipper, and Kennedy, his bucko mate. Hawley was not a seafaring man, but had been shanghaied to the island by Captain Van Asvelt, notorious blackbirder and South Seas outlaw.

At Vanua Lava we were mystified upon discovering a wrecked ship in the lagoon; and while the company of the *Emma P.* debated her possible identity, I slipped away in a small boat to explore the great cave (whose black mouth we could see in the sheer rock wall facing us) in which Hawley had found the birds' nests. As I rested on my oars I could see in the clear water beneath me a thousand forms of marine life; while the air above was dark with birds going and coming from the grotto. So enchanted was I that I forgot the passage of time—forgot it until the rising tides had lifted far above the lip of the opening. I was a prisoner in the belly of the mountain.

I managed to beach my boat on a shelf of rock, and felt my way along the twisting passage that inclined gradually upward. After what seemed hours I emerged into a small opening on the island. There was a strange rock platform there. The gruesome remains strewn about told me unmistakably I had come upon the sacrificial altar of cannibal savages!

When I regained the ship and told my story, Mac decided to blow up the altar to impress the blacks with our power. Accordingly that night Tom, Bunk, our bosun, and I entered the cave with a keg of gunpowder. Near the

Concluding a Novel of the Cannibal Isles

altar, we rescued a captive white man. It was only after we set off our charge that the man told us he was Father Delaney, a missionary priest; then he cried out wildly that his niece, Jean Bradley, was still in the hands of the savages.

I returned with him to the scene of the explosion, but saw nothing of the girl. Joined by Mac, Kennedy and several of our sailors, all armed, Father Delaney objected so strongly to our firearms that Mac had him carried aboard the *Emma P,* while we proceeded with our search.

We found the jungle a veritable death trap of ingenious pitfalls; and, despite our caution, Tom fell into one, wounding himself. Then it was that we got our first sight of the black natives. Diabolical, grinning fiendishly, but somewhat timid of our "thunder sticks," nearly a hundred of them emerged from the bush. Mac harangued them, and after a time one of them—evidently the chief devil doctor—signaled us to follow.

Presently we arrived at a large, low building. Without hesitation the black priests crawled through the small door, we following. With their ugly features tinctured by the unwholesome light of the place, the devil doctors suggested demons straight from Hades . . .

MAC shuddered.

"To think that men will prefer a place like that to the bright sunlight! But I know what the scheme is. The fools think that inside there they will have us under the spell of a lot of spirits so they can bunco us for all they're worth. They've given up all hope of doin' us physical harm, so they're tryin' the spiritual now. Let's show 'em that we ain't afraid of anything."

"That's more than half the battle won," Kennedy reassured those who

might have had their doubts as to the advisability of entering. "If any of you back out now we'll lose the reputation chance gave us. Go ahead, Skipper, or will you let me go first?"

Mac made no reply. With his rifle held to the front, other rifles bristling at his sides, he stepped through. Kennedy was right upon Mac's heels, and like a lot of sheep following the leader we piled in.

All the natives of the rank and file had stood outside at a respectful distance. Not one of them made an attempt to enter. That place must have been taboo for all but the chiefs, who, inside, assumed the rôles of priests. But as a matter of precaution against any possible surprise we dropped the curtain over the opening.

Then, before our eyes could accustom themselves to the sudden change from bright sunlight to the gloom, we stopped as if rooted to the bare, hard ground upon which we stood. . .

From somewhere out of the darkness had come a stifled cry which had not been uttered by a native!

As we listened, imagining a thousand echoes ringing in our ears, the cry was followed by a low, dying moan. Then all was still; all but the spasmodic puffs of the breaths blown upon the glowing coconut husks and the hiss and sputter of the torches.

The air was acrid with smoke. The heat was oppressive. Not a move did we make; not a sound. We listened tensely until our eyes adapted themselves to the dull orange glow of the torches. There came no repetition of the startling cry, which seemed so incongruous in so gruesome a place which returning vision now revealed.

Every rough joist of walls and roof, every rough, rack-like shelf, of which there were rows above rows along the side walls, was covered with a deposit of greasy looking, black soot. Wherever the glow of the torches danced upon this deposit it took on the luster of a deep maroon. Black smoke was pouring from the torches, thickly, like heavy oil flowing from the spouts of containers. Slowly it spread until the flames looked like lights seen through screens of crêpe.

The stench stung my nostrils so it took an effort to suppress a sneeze. However, I remembered, and so did all the others, that discomforts of the body must be held concealed.

But the shelves along the side walls! These held the temple's treasure. The only treasure the place contained, for the altar upon which the fire glowed was but a crude rectangular structure of unhewn stones.

Upon the shelves were rows and rows of age and smoke blackened skulls! A ghastly sight in that atmosphere—a sight to unnerve the strongest man.

The sight of skulls shocked me no more. I was well used to seeing them as decorations, would have been surprised if this place had not contained any. There must have been many hundreds. Later we learned that these were the skulls of departed priests; a treasure which it must have taken centuries to accumulate.

But that cry! That moan! Where could it have come from? As I looked around I saw nothing behind which a human being could have been hidden. Besides us there was no one present but the priests. They were now squatting on both sides of the altar. Uva Kulu, now in the rôle of high priest, was standing behind it, stirring the glowing husks with a stick. A short distance beyond the altar was the blank wall, covered by coarse, smoked up matting.

Carefully, an idea taking shape in my befuddled mind, I bent a searching gaze on that innocent looking wall covering.

Could that matting conceal something? Estimating the length of the interior after viewing the outside of the building, that possibility seemed hardly reasonable.

But I was soon to learn that I was not the only one who had his eye upon the curtain. Fate was at work!

CEREMONIOUSLY the high priest beckoned his distinguished visitors to make themselves comfortable, if comfort could be derived from sitting on large, round bundles made up of sticks and palm leaves. Irregular rows of such bundles were distributed over the dirt floor.

We complied with the request. Some of the men, however, sat back to back with those of us who faced the altar. These men kept their eyes upon the door. All guns were kept at hand.

Now, with the necessary gestures and grunts with which he had to express himself, Uva Kulu informed us that we were gathered for a council of war. A war of commerce, and to make it honorable like a war of arms, its program would have to be discussed in the presense of his own and his staff's ancestors. Time and time again his hand swept along the rows of skulls to remind his visitors of the presence of those nobles.

But very little impression the opening address had made on Mac. His mind for the present was not on a council of war. He had not even bothered to comment upon the queer means which Fate had employed to play her prank.

"Yes," he grumbled under his breath, "I know damn well why he brought us into this smokehouse. That sly fox has more than the spirits here that he thinks can bewitch us. There's something behind that curtain, the power of which he is going to put to a test."

"You're right," said Kennedy. "I know what you're thinkin' of. I've had the same suspicion. Lord, what inhuman devils these fellows are! An' here we—"

"Hold on!" Mac caught Kennedy's arm and forced him back on to his seat. The mate had half risen. "No rough work in a place like this. Fanaticism will overpower fear. Chance has started this an' chance will finish it."

Kennedy slumped down, wiping his forehead. I saw that Mac's cool headedness had just about averted a stampede by our men toward the altar. There were angry growls.

At that tense moment only stealth and deception could win out. But Fate, herself, was about to use stealth and deception!

A movement by the priests as if they were about to spring to their feet showed that they were aware of something being wrong. At the same moment some large, winged insect had flown into the flame of a torch. The torch sputtered and blazed up violently.

Then Mac, quick witted, was on his feet; waved all those present to immobility and silence . . .

The council was being disturbed by the spirit of the red headed devil he had left on board. He was hovering in the air of this very temple. He was taunting Mac for more tribute. Could not the priests see him? There he was! Concealed under the roof, he was sliding down on that curling smoke, hiding his damnable red head in the flame of that torch!

All this Mac had enacted with such fantastic movements of his hand, describing figures in the thick smoke, until I myself saw a devil gliding through the air.

To a man the priests were alarmed. Their imagination so easily overwrought to a climax now made them see anything Mac desired. No chance must be given them now to come to their senses.

They began to shoot a line of frightened jabber at us which none of us understood. But the words seemed to come in the form of a question, and Mac took a chance.

He flung his arms as if he were trying to seize somebody in front of him and carry him off. He took a chance that in their fright the priests might understand the words "devil" and "white god". The words had been impressed upon their minds often enough previously.

"Devil want white god!" he shouted as if he was frightened beyond his wits

while he seized the imaginary thing.

The priests must have grasped the meaning of the unreasonable demand. Some of them looked at each other in alarm, others shot frightened glances at the curtain behind the altar.

Mac made use of the spell by acting as if he had gone into consultation with us.

"We can't use dynamite in here," he said, making his voice sound excited. "But, Bunk, Kennedy an' some of you who can be sure of your shots, blaze at that pole from which the curtain is hung as soon as you see me pointin' that way. Break it to splinters, but don't shoot low an' commit murder!"

Before the priests could collect themselves to find words or to make a motion, Mac yelled as if he had received a severe shock. All eyes were upon him and he pointed a violently trembling finger at the bewitched torch. His hand traced a curve toward the darkness under the roof. He gesticulated as if he tried to drive something overhead away. The fanned air made the thick smoke surge in most fantastic shapes. Something surely moved overhead.

A dozen pairs of bulging white eyes were following the movement of the black clouds as they scurried helter-skelter as if in search of something which they knew existed somewhere within. Filthy hands were pointing upward, following every movement of the clouds. Gradually the movement came nearer and nearer to the top of the curtain, for Mac, blowing his breath upward while making inarticulate sounds which might have been emitted under the stress of sheer consternation, or might have been sounds intended to frighten a devil, let his frantic motions approach that direction more and more.

The clouds were swirling about the horizontal pole. The priests uttered yells of fright. Mac pointed with his finger.

"Devil!" he yelled.

Came a tremendous clap of thunder. The pole was shattered, bamboo splinters flew, the priests dropped prone upon the ground, their arms shielding their heads, their faces buried in the dirt.

The matting curtain sagged, dropped, caught on some sharp corner which it had concealed. It ripped, hung to the thing which had arrested its descent; its added weight overbalanced the concealed object and then the whole thing toppled over the bodies of the prostrate priests toward our charging men.

When the echo of the thunder died down there came howls and wails like those of frightened animals from outside.

THE draft created by the falling mass stirred smoke and soot flakes into such turbulence that the air became too thick for one to see more than two feet ahead. But there were no obstacles in our way to keep us from coming close to the fallen object. Not a man had to ask questions about what it was.

The thing was a bamboo cage, about three feet square, six feet high if it would have stood upright. As it lay there on its side, it contained the prostrate figure of a woman. She had fainted.

Orders were not necessary. Sheath knives slashed at the lashings of the stout bamboo bars, hands tore at them, and the unfortunate woman was laid upon the same matting which covered the prostrate, howling priests.

What little there was left of the woman's clothing was disarranged, dirty and torn. But at least it served as some protection to save her the shame of being exposed before the eyes of so many rough men. Her features, her bare arms and limbs were so covered with grime and soot that it was impossible to judge whether she were young or old. The poor thing must have suffered tortures even if she had been in that hell but a day.

Mac soon established order out of the

confusion. His voice was calm.

"Some of you men take a couple of these bars an' cut a piece of this mattin' an' make a stretcher," he commanded. "Now don't go at this thing like a lot of wild men. You, All-Hands, take four men with you an' hustle her on board. Drive some of the blacks outside to act as bearers. She ain't too heavy to be taken across that crazy bridge. The rest of us are goin' to stay behind an' force these devils to come to terms with us. We got 'em licked."

The scene outside the temple convinced me that those who remained inside were in no danger. The natives were huddled together, frightened out of their wits. Neither threats nor persuasion would induce one of them to approach the temple within less than thirty feet. When we approached them with the stretcher, all but those who wore the bead necklaces, which marked them as our recruits, fled. Four of these I pressed into service as bearers. These men seemed to be possessed of more courage then the rest of this priest ridden lot of fanatics. Possibly that is the reason why they had volunteered to serve as divers.

Of course it was my intention to gain the beach by the route which I knew, to emerge upon the clear ground of the cliff, then to traverse the path which we had cut through the thicket.

But no, I was to discover the route which the natives employed when going from the High Place to the beach.

We had come to within a hundred yards of the end of the jungle path when the stretcher bearers suddenly turned to the right. Apparently it was their intention to go through the thick growth. I headed them off and they lowered their burden to the ground. The most alert of them seemed to understand what was on my mind. He nodded assuringly, then made for the bush and beckoned me to follow.

After about fifteen feet of worming through thick underbrush we came upon a straight path, leading eastward; in the distance I saw the bright sunlight shine upon the bridge.

"I wonder how them niggers can find just where to make the turn," reflected one of my men when our whole company emerged upon the hidden path. "Strikes me that bush looked all alike all the way."

"Animal instinct," I suggested. "They're just like a machine that's geared to go so many cogs and then stops."

At the bridge I let two of the men cross and stand guard with their rifles while two of the bearers carried the light burden over. But when we reached the place where the chopped down decoy curtain and the charred cavern of the pitfall was revealed before their startled eyes, the blacks became quite nervous. With much head shaking and shrugging of my shoulders I made them believe that the sight was new to me. Likely they were now under the impression that the whole island must have become suddenly possessed by evil spirits.

CHAPTER XVI

JEAN BRADLEY

ALL those who had stood by the ship were lined up along the rail when our boat approached. The first thing which caught my eye was the huge cage, which had imprisoned the missionary, standing upon the forecastle head, exhibited like a trophy of victory.

The prisoner was now a free man. I saw him on the quarterdeck between Cockney and the cook. He seemed more like the man we had first brought to in the cave. Cockney and the cook were patting his back soothingly, heaping words of encouragement upon him as the boat drew near. It was impossible for the tortured man to conceal his emotions. When he saw the crude stretcher lying across the boat's thwarts, two men rowing in the bow, two in the stern, he dropped to his knees and buried his face in his hands.

"She's alive! She's not hurt—she's fainted!" I shouted, accelerating the boat's headway by sculling with the steering oar. "Tell him she's safe!"

I could see that the poor fellow had not taken time to clean up. Himself in the security of the ship, he must have suffered tortures, knowing that one so dear to him was still in grave danger. My heart filled with remorse that we should have treated him so cruelly while in his grief. But after all we had acted for the best.

At my words the man raised his tear streaked face. He looked years older than when I had first seen him.

"What say you?" he asked, bewildered, remaining on his knees.

"She's safe," I replied, swinging the boat alongside.

For a moment the man stared at the still face upon the coarse matting. It seemed as if he hardly dared to believe his eyes. With an effort he clasped his violently shaking hands, then he reeled and Cockney caught him and eased him gently upon the deck, in the shade of the awning.

The men were too stunned to heap questions upon me. Like automatons they obeyed my orders as we lifted the stretcher on board.

"The skipper and the others are all right; they'll be on board directly," I forestalled the questions I could read on the many faces. "We've won out . . . Don't bother me now."

Cockney and the cook helped me carry the girl into the cabin where we stretched her out on a bunk.

When I returned on deck the missionary was on his feet, supported by two men. At sight of me he pressed his left hand to his forehead and feebly extended his right. I grasped the proffered hand, and a new flood of tears began to stream down the man's face.

"Forgive the harsh words I've spoken," he sobbed. "'Twas grief that overpowered me. Many a time I've spoken of you men as black hearted scoundrels, but in spite of your sins, you'll fight your way into Kingdom Come, for you fear not even the Almighty."

Too abashed to make a reply, I pressed his hand, then led him below.

FOR awhile I debated with myself whether it would be best to return to the shore and rejoin the landing party.

"What would you do if you were me?" I turned to Cockney for advice. "Would you go back?"

Cockney looked at me in surprise.

"Would I go back? Where? You ain't told me nothin' yet."

"Let's have the lay of it," urged one of the men.

In the general confusion of voices clamoring for information I could hardly make a beginning. But a voice from far aft broke in and saved me:

"For Pete's sake, give the man a chance to get his bearings. Let him get some of that muck off him first."

It was Tom. He was lying in a hammock, stretched under the awning. He seemed to be quite cheerful. I shook my questioners off and approached him.

"What's she look like?" Tom was burning with excitement. He did not give me time to inquire about the extent of his injury. Of course, he meant the girl.

"Can't tell you yet, but you'll soon see her yourself if she don't flop off in the shakes when she comes to. How's your taffrail stanchion?"

"Not bleeding any more, but I feel kind of shaky from the loss of blood, and that red headed devil there almost burned the leg off me with the carbolic."

A man brought me a bucket of fresh water and a scrubbing brush. Thus I was able to kill two birds with one stone, to give myself a much needed scrubbing and to satisfy the curiosity of my shipmates by relating our experience ashore.

After an hour I broke away and dived overboard. Cockney, of course, had become the brunt of many jests when my story had reached the point where we

had threatened the priests with the presence of his red head within the temple.

With my knife clamped between my teeth, my weather eye open for fins, I circled the ship time after time. The men followed me around at the rail, some of them still shooting questions, others cracking jokes about the sharks.

I have noticed on many occasions that sharks have some sort of sense which warns them of a knife being in the possession of a swimmer or diver. Nothing pertaining to the deep molested me. As always, my troubles came from the land. When I was at the height of my enjoyment, there came a voice:

"Here, you fool, haven't you sense enough to keep out o' that? You go an' man the gig an' go round to the lagoon an' take soundin's. We're goin' to tow an' warp in. The divin' crew will be out in the mornin.' "

That was Mac's way of announcing that he had met with success. He bellowed all this long before his boats reached the ship.

Before evening four whaleboats, each manned by five men, had towed the ship into the lagoon.

A BERTH in the calm lagoon was quite a welcome diversion from the hectic hours spent ashore.

The divers were so anxious to earn the coveted treasures of knives, hatchets and trinkets, that their canoes were alongside the ship with the rising sun. Then came a strenuous day of prospecting over the lagoon and nearby shoals with our nine whaleboats. Many an inquisitive shark, threatening the safety of our divers by coming too near the boats, fell victim to our pikes. The greatest danger of attack is when the diver comes to the surface to catch his breath.

The blacks enjoyed all this as much for the sport as for the gain. We introduced them to the art of ballast diving, which was something new to these primitive men. At first they regarded the procedure with suspicion, but after a few of us had shown them the advantages of the trick, they considered it as such fun that nothing could have persuaded them to revert to free diving.

In ballast diving a stone of about sixty pounds is securely lashed to the end of a line. The stone is dropped over the boat's side and held suspended about two feet below the surface. The diver then takes his seat upon the stone, straddling the line with his legs and gripping it with his hands. He will take three or four deep breaths, then, as a sign that he is ready for the plunge, he strikes the surface a sharp blow with the palm of his hand. The line is released by the tender, and down goes the stone with its passenger, in many cases to a depth of over sixty feet.

The method has several advantages over free diving. The ballast diver reaches bottom in less than one-third the time of the free diver. Since he is drawn down by dead weight, he reaches any depth without the expenditure of energy. Therefore he has more time, and reserves his breath for gliding over the bottom in search of his quarry. At the bottom, of course, he releases his hold on the line, and he regains the surface through the buoyancy of his body and upward swimming. The stone is left at the bottom until the diver reaches the surface. The line is therefore a guide to him to save himself from coming up under the boat's bottom and possibly breaking his neck.

The free diver swims down. Due to the energy he expends and the time he wastes before he reaches bottom in water of forty feet or over, he has but little time to do his work. Also, he must exercise more caution when coming up, since there is no guiding line which tells him where the boat is. Many a broken neck or fractured skull has resulted from recklessly breaking the surface.

To the danger of suffering the tortures of the bends all divers, descending fifty feet or more, are subjected. The primitive, naked divers, who brave so many dangers for the lure of pearls and shell,

are even more liable to the bends than men who work in caissons and those who dive in submarine armor. The only air for vitalizing their bodies during the plunge is what they carry in their lungs. The oxygen in that air is soon exhausted. It is quite reasonable, therefore, that in coming up they cast caution to the winds and ascend too rapidly. The experienced divers let the air escape gradually while they are rising. They learn to master the dread of the drowning sensation which the ejection of the air below the surface gives.

Luck had favored us in the selection of our divers. They turned out to be courageous fellows, and they learned quickly. Many fine specimens of shell were brought up that first day. Within the lagoon was a small islet. A mere sand bar, surrounded by deep water. It offered an excellent site for a "graveyard", the ground for rotting out the bivalves.

The divers found the atoll with its many coconut palms a very convenient place for building temporary palm leaf huts. These simple abodes saved them the trip to the main island every night, for we did not care to quarter them on board. The tough flesh of the pearl mussels soon became their favorite food, and we had to keep our eyes open and examine every bivalve opened for food purposes lest it might contain a valuable pearl.

It was not long before the blacks learned that we valued the little stones occasionally found in a shell rather highly. That meant that nights the anchor watch had to keep its eyes and rifles upon the graveyard to discourage any ambitious black from making a little private raid.

BEING the second mate, I had charge of the diving crews, and having to deal with so many novices my mind was kept pretty well on pearl fishing for the first two days. During this period I almost forgot about our guests and the adventures ashore. The end of the second day, however, brought a little diversion.

I had engaged in a little chat with Tom, who began to show remarkable signs of improvement, when he suddenly said rather cheerfully:

"Hang around the deck for awhile tonight. Your eyes might get a little rest from looking at blacks."

"What's the lay of it?" I asked.

Tom grinned rather sheepishly.

"A lot of lay to getting spiked and not getting nursed by a greaser of a cook."

Before I could make sense out of Tom's words the answer came in the form of a question from behind me.

"Am I intruding?" spoke a timid voice.

I faced about. Surely there was relief from looking at blacks all day. It was Jean Bradley. With her small feet encased in Chinese slippers, obtained from the ship's slop chest, she had approached noiselessly.

What a pathetic picture she was in that twilight!

Her face looked pale and drawn. This was to be expected after the horrible experience she had gone through. The marble pallor of her skin so contrasted with the blue rings which days and nights of sleepless suffering had formed around her hazel eyes that they looked sunken and dark. As the light breeze played with her thick blonde hair, which hung loose about her shoulders, I could tell by short ends which appeared here and there that whole strands had been sheared off. Evidently the sticky soot which had matted such strands had resisted all efforts to remove it so that the sacrifice had to be made.

Poor thing! Despite the marks left by the hardships she had suffered, one could see that she was young and pretty.

Her attire, too, was not calculated to enhance her beauty. The nearest thing to feminine dress that could be found among the ship's stores was some of those ugly printed calico gowns which

we sometimes traded to the more civilized natives. She had been forced to drape herself in one of these shapeless atrocities. To lend at least a little touch of grace to her slim figure, she had wound a yellow scarf of a cheap trade material around her waist. Of course, what she had worn on the day of her rescue was beyond redemption.

I noticed that she was limping slightly as she approached. But really it was a wonder that she could walk at all. Her right hand was extended in greeting. She looked at me frankly.

"You—you are the one who led the rescue party, I understand," she stammered. "I hope you will forgive me for not speaking to you before, but—but—"

"Oh, pshaw," I broke in tactlessly, so confused that my cap slipped from my hand and went overboard when I tore it from my head. "There was nothing to the whole thing. Tom, I mean Mr. Hawley, is the only one who got something to remember it by."

I could hear Tom chuckle over my apparent discomfort.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Hawley," she said. "But I wish to thank you personally. I understand that it was a discovery you made in a cave which led to all this."

"Oh, that connection between the cave and the altar!" I blurted out, only getting myself more and more involved. I was scratching my head for something to say. Then, "I guess that discovery of mine wouldn't have done you much good if we hadn't found where the blacks kept you."

That was just about the kind of remark one could expect a second mate to make before a lady. The girl fought hard to make a reply, but her voice was choked off by a fit of hysterical sobs.

That was a little too much for me. Cold sweat broke out on my forehead. My mortification might have led me to jump overboard had not somebody touched me gently on the arm at the moment. I spun around and faced the missionary. The old man quietly brushed by me, shaking his head with a mien of mild reproach.

"Jeany," he said, leading the girl gently away, "it's time for you to turn in. You've been up too long this day and you mustn't talk any more this night."

When they were gone, Tom reached from his hammock and grabbed me by the shirt collar.

"Say," he said into my ear, "as a social entertainer you'd make a great success in a menagerie. You better bunk in with your divers and keep away from passenger ships."

The missionary came back directly. He placed his hand on my shoulder in a fatherly manner and sat down on the rail beside me.

"Young man, I don't want you to feel offended at me," he said. "But I shall ask you as a favor to me never to encourage the lassie to speak about what I'd like her to forget. Thanks to the good Lord she's a strong girl, but if she's led to brood and think about that terrible experience, it might leave its mark later on."

Perhaps Tom feared that I might again make a break, for he spoke immediately.

"She sure has will power," he said. "She should rest up and give her nerves a chance to calm down, but instead of that she insists upon waiting on me. Makes me feel like a rotter to receive such special attention."

The missionary waved Tom's self-reproach aside.

"Let her have her way about it, my boy," he enjoined. " 'Tis no more than right that she should be comforting one who's done much for her. She's always been of a strong will, and helping the stricken is her aim. 'Twas by her will that she came with me. Her parents ha' been dead since she was a wee tot, and it's me who's brought her up. So she made up her mind that it was her duty to be by my side in the hour of danger. That's why she came to this forsaken island."

THE information the priest had volunteered raised my hopes of having a little light thrown upon the enigmatic adventure. This time I tried to be a little more tactful.

"A noble girl; not many like her," I accorded heartily. "Too good for these shores. But what in—in the world ever made you think of coming to this place? Of all the savages in the world, the Banks Islanders are about the most treacherous. What did you ever expect to do with them?"

The missionary nodded his head mournfully.

" 'Tis a fair question, that," he assented. "You've a right to ask it. I've answered it this day to your captain—bless him for being so forgiving, for I accused him wrongly when we first met. But, lad, you know what I've been through. 'Twas enough to turn a man's head, and I've found that you all meant well. It hurts me to admit that these heathens understand only the language you speak with your bullets and dynamite. I'd heard of 'em and how other men of my calling gave them a wide berth. 'Tis I who felt it my duty to come to them to bring to them the word o' God. Now I've lost most everything I had in this world, but I don't lament the loss of it, for money's the most useless thing on earth. It has become a necessity because those who love it above all else have made it so.

"There's not much to be told about my trip here and its disastrous ending. You might have heard of trips like it before. But once more I will speak of it, then let it be forever amen."

I felt a little ashamed at having reopened an old wound.

"I'm sorry," I said. "Don't let's talk about the thing any more. Sooner or later the skipper will tell me."

The missionary waved my apology away.

"You're not offending me. You've saved what's dearest to me in this world, and it's no more than right that I should tell you about it.

" 'Tis nigh on three weeks that I came here. Made the passage from the Fijis after chartering the schooner in Levuka. That's where Jeany joined me after coming from Aukland, where she's been staying with a sister of her dead father's. She's my own sister's child, her father had been a captain. Bradley was his name. You may have heard of him.

" 'Twas an unlucky voyage from the start. We were at sea but two days when the schooner's captain died from a fever that's been ailing him off and on for years. A good man he was, Captain Drummond—but his mate! He was as big a scoundrel as ever walked a deck. Never a day passed that he wasn't drunk and giving the men—a lot of scalliwags—a free hand. Jeany had to stay in her cabin most of the time so she wouldn't be shocked by their foul language. All this I discovered after the captain's death, when it was too late.

"It was that mate and his vile crew that brought the schooner to grief. Instead of anchoring a good way off the beach, as you did, and giving me a chance to let the natives see that I was on a mission of mercy, that mate ran the schooner on a rock and beached her to keep her from sinking under our feet. He was too ignorant to know the danger he had plunged us into. What chance did I have to reason with the swarm of black devils that overwhelmed us? Despite my protests, the crew started shooting. They killed and wounded quite a few. Then it was too late. The fight infuriated the blacks, and the crew was butchered, every blessed man of them. They've all been eaten—ugh!—and their heads were put on the altar you've destroyed.

"The blacks set fire to the schooner. They did not even plunder her. As she got lighter while she burned, the tide floated her off the beach and she sank where you found her.

"Jeany and I were spared for a worse fate, as is well known to you. Lad,

you've no idea of what we've suffered all these days. Nights they've kept us caged up in that black, devilish temple of theirs. Days the painted priests performed rituals over us, and all those days and nights there was the torture of fearing what would come at the end. They fed us on fruits—I'm wondering now how we ever ate them, but it's not so easy a task to starve wilfully, for while there's life there's hope. And hoping and praying we did. No one knows better than you do that it was not in vain.

"Now you've heard it. You won't be cross now with an old man for losing his head the day we met. For the moment I thought you were foolishly antagonizing the natives the same as the crew of my schooner did. Now I know that you acted for the best."

CROSS with him! Who could be cross with a man for losing his head for a few minutes after such an experience? Why, ninety-nine out of a hundred would never have gotten their reason back. Few would have survived the torture of being confined in that black hell hole of a temple more than a night or two. And then actually to go through the experience of being about to be sacrificed in the flames of an altar dedicated to pagan demons! Had any one ever lived through such a thing?

Then, a tender girl, the victim's own niece, forced to witness the sacrifice! A wonder that the experience did not make the girl a hopeless mental wreck.

But how had she escaped from the explosion?

"It was a miracle, Father," I said, "how your niece ever escaped being blown to bits by the explosion. I shiver when I think of it. What an awful thing we came near doing!"

Bunk had appeared out of the darkness. I had been scarcely aware of his having been a silent listener for some time.

"Yeah, that was a miracle," he reflected in a hoarse whisper.

The missionary turned and looked reproachfully at Bunk. Then he shook his head reverently and said:

"There are no miracles, my boy, which the Almighty can't perform. 'Twas His hand that guided you. What is the power of gunpowder compared with the power of that hand? He guided the explosion so that the great stone, which you found leaning against the post, upset so it would shield the lassie. He drove the fear of the power they did not understand into the hearts of the benighted savages so that it overwhelmed the fear of the demons they thought they were pacifying. 'Twas that fear which made them regard the lassie as a goddess stronger than their demons and, though their flight was hasty, they thought they could protect themselves by carrying on their shoulders the one to whom they attributed such power."

I made no attempt to argue against that statement. How could any man expect to disprove it? Instead I ventured toward something more practical.

"Did you start straight for the jungle with the intention of looking for your niece when we left you alone that night?" I asked. "Man, you took an awful chance. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if that bush is man-trapped all over. You should have seen how carefully we proceeded when we found a path through the canebrakes. Even then, when we came the other way, poor Tom—well, you've heard about it by now, I'm sure."

The old man nodded his head gravely.

"I've talked much with the brave lad this day, and so has Jeany, though it's my wish that they'll talk about things more pleasant in the future. Your captain has told me all about the dangers of these island jungles. It was my ignorance of the savages' devilish ways and a breaking heart that drove me on, lad. Ignorance and a breaking heart we of this world would call it, but it was all planned to be that way by a stronger

will than mine. It was God's will that I should fall into the hands of the heathen once more, that in their ignorance they should credit me with the power of having destroyed their altar, so that their fear of you, upon whom they looked as demons incarnate, should guide you to where they had the lassie hidden."

"Queer, how all these coincidences worked hand in hand," I murmured. "That we should have anchored there at just the proper time. Then the strange circumstance under which I discovered that tunnel. It *would* make a fellow think it was all for some predestined purpose."

"You put it wrong when you spoke of coincidence, my lad," was the mild reproach. "You spoke right when you mentioned a predestined purpose—" he raised his hand to the stars—"for up there it has been planned long before you were called to take your part. 'Twas the man who was married to my sister, Jeany's father, who became wealthy by carrying slaves from these very islands. When he died 'twas his will that his money should be spent to expiate his sins. He left it to me, the man nearest to his kin, to perform this duty. How better could I have done it than to carry to these benighted heathen the word of God? Think, lad, what a blow it was to me and to the daughter of Jim Bradley when we felt that our good work was to end in disaster."

"I'm just wondering," I reflected, "if you would have met with a different reception if it had not been for Van Asvelt. Did you ever hear of him? He raised some havoc here before you came. He purposely antagonized the natives against white men."

The missionary nodded gloomily.

"I've heard a good deal about that blackguard," he said. "That lad there in that hammock and your captain's told me of his crime here. Yes, I believe it was his work which caused most of the hardships we suffered. Those who live on the island now don't remember the slaving days of Jim Bradley. And despite his sins, Jim was never a cruel man."

For some time Bunk had been impatient with a question on his mind.

"Pardon me if I seem inquisitive," he suddenly blurted out. "Could that Jim Bradley, of whom you were speakin', be that notorious blackbirder, Captain Bradley? I've heard rumors that he was a descendant of one of James Cook's officers. Could your brother-in-law have been that man?"

The missionary looked at Bunk in surprise.

"Rumors will follow the men of the sea the world around," he said. "Yes, that was the same Jim Bradley who was Jeany's father. His kin of generations back traveled with James Cook. But he was not one of the officers. He was a naturalist with the Cook expedition. His name was Banks, the man after whom these islands were named."

"Small world," mused Bunk. "Small world!"

THE opinion which freelance traders often were apt to express about missionaries was not very complimentary to those who often became martyrs in their work for the good of mankind. The claim was made that the spreading of the gospel was merely a blind, the fundamental object being to find an inroad for commerce, to teach the savages of remote islands the ways of civilized man, so that greedy manufacturers and merchants would have new markets for their wares.

I have no means of proving whether such accusations were true or false. But even if the supporters of the missions were really moved through greed, the missionaries themselves, the men who risked their lives among the hostile savages, were moved by unselfish thoughts.

Be this as it may, if ever a man attacked the work he had chosen for himself with sincere motives, that man was Father Delaney. And who could accuse

him of working for gain while unknown to the world he braved the dangers of his calling?

An untiring man he was. Within less than a week after his rescue he spent half his nights on the beach of the atoll among our divers. And frail little Jean Bradley was always at his side.

From them the divers learned words and phrases of our language. They fairly worshipped the old man and his niece. Evenings before dark it became a familiar sight to see them gathered around their teachers, spellbound.

But our divers were not the only converts. Tom's recovery from his wound was almost miraculous under the spell of being nursed by tender hands. It was not long before the gig, our smallest boat, had a willing crew of one oarsman for its evening trips to the beach. Tom was the goat, and I never saw a more cheerful, willing goat. It did not take me long to find out that the "goat getter" was Jean Bradley.

I thought there was something of a serious, faraway look in Tom's eyes when he took the "sky pilot boat", as we renegades now jocularly called the gig, ashore for the fourth time. Kennedy and I were at the rail, watching. I nudged Kennedy with my elbow.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing particular," I replied. "Only it kinda struck me that Tom's not going to stick to trading after this trip."

"What makes you think so?"

"Aw, hell!" This came from me in the manner of one who laments the loss of a shipmate who has gone wrong. "I took a drink awhile ago and offered Tom the bottle. Why, he refused to take a drink with me. Told me to put the bottle where it belonged. What would you say to that?"

"Huh, quite sensible, I would say. Did you do it?"

"I did. And then I threw the empty bottle overboard."

"Huh, quite like you! An' then?"

"He called me a drunken sot!"

"Well, he called you right, didn't he? Tom's nobody's fool. That boy's got eyes in his head. Tradin' is all right for dubs like you an' me. But Tom has too much sense to always be a fool."

"Well, if this isn't the damnedest trip I ever made," I persisted doggedly. "Here we got a good supercargo to take the place of that dude we used to have, and now we got to lose him again. I tell you it's bad luck to have a parson on board a ship."

"It turned out to be a cheerful trip." Kennedy grinned. "You're bringin' up plenty of good, thick shell, you're gatherin' a good harvest of birds' nests, aren't you? So, what's bitin' you?"

"Yeah, if it only stays like this till we get our load." I sighed pessimistically.

Such an exotic sight, on the starlit deck of a freelance trader, as the silhouettes of two figures, almost blended into one, reposing upon the cabin top should have lent an air of cheerfulness to the lonely anchorage. Pearl fishing meant strenuous work for a second mate. Evenings always found me on board quite willing to enjoy my rest. It might have been that my soul was unromantic, that I did not know how to appreciate the romance of the mild tropical nights on the silvery surface of a calm lagoon fringed by whispering coconut palms.

But a supercargo's work was light. The evenings did not find him spent and worn. If his heart was bent toward romance—which Tom's heart evidently was—Fate could not have treated him more kindly.

Even such a coarse ass as I could not help recognizing the radiant beauty of Jean Bradley after the traces of her suffering had disappeared. What the days of life in the open air and the noble work to which she devoted herself so cheerfully did to this clean minded girl could be described only by Tom. Tom saw her through eyes different from mine. He would have found no difficulty in matching her hazel eyes with the placid clearness of the lagoon, the

luster of her wavy, golden hair with the sun. Yes, evening after evening it dawned more and more upon me that Tom was in love and glad of it.

But nobody jollied him about it, for everybody on board that ship liked Tom. Mac simply smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"What was to be expected?" he said one evening after the party had returned on board. "I'm glad it happened to be Tom. It ain't interferin' with his work. He's turned out to be a good supercargo."

Father Delaney gripped Mac's hand and nodded his head approvingly.

"He's a brave, deserving lad, Tom is," he concurred. "I have no fear for my Jeany as long's she is with him. Let's go below, Skipper, and wish the lovers well. A little o' the auld, smoky Scotch o' yours isn't going to afflict my soul for the morrow's work amongst the heathen."

Yes, Father Delaney turned out to be a sky pilot whom gentle minded renegades could not detest.

CHAPTER XVII

STORM CLOUDS

IN CALM prepare for storm. A wise South Pacific trader observed that rule.

A month and a half of peaceful pearl fishing had passed. Father Delaney had made good progress with the divers. They proved themselves willing pupils and, since they were removed from the evil influence of the devil doctors, I believe they were sincere. Now it was possible to converse with them more with words than with sign language. This often helped to facilitate the day's work, for sign language was cumbersome and time consuming.

It also helped me to get a vague idea of the origin of the Fête of the Full Moon, and learn the significance of the dried squids which some of the devil doctors had brandished on the ends of sticks at our first meeting with them.

One night Bunk and I were conversing with one of the most alert of the divers on the beach of the atoll. The man was the one who had survived Van Asvelt's raid. I had named him Sambo because he had a name which would have left one's tongue in a hopelessly twisted condition after trying to pronounce it. I doubted whether this man was still under the delusion that we were devils. If he was, he must have come to the conclusion that some devils could be quite congenial.

The moon was shining upon the beach and the lagoon. It was just the right night for yarning. I pointed at the moon.

"Sambo," I said, "what make black fella fright along he fella devil?"

Sambo's eyes widened until they were two shining white orbs.

"Oooh!" he emitted in a voice, husky with awe.

"He fella too much deb'l. You fella no savvy he fella?" Sambo seemed very much surprised. "He fella—" Here he was unable to express himself in words, but by waving his arms and legs about, then pointing at the water, he gave me to understand what he meant.

"Ah, you mean an octopus," I helped out, making my words more impressive by gesticulating with my arms.

"He fella occocotus." Sambo nodded. "He too much got ahm, plenny ahm. He make long big ahm in wate'—" At this he pointed at the moonbeam which reached over the surface of the lagoon. I knew that the same beam, seen from Vanua Lava, would reach toward the caves. Sambo continued, "He deb'l make long big ahm in too much hole in wate'—you likum savvy what make too much hole in wate'? All 'ight! Me talk you.

"Long, long time—too much long time, he fella too much top—" he indicated the volcano on Vanua Lava, which could be seen beyond the fringe of palms—"go boom, too much boom. Big boom make hole in stone in wate'. Big

deb'l stop along, look-see hole in wate', den make long big ahm in hole, den make plenny li'l deb'l in hole. Black fella deb'l doc-doc—big-big fella deb'l doc-doc—stop along look-see by hole. Wantum catchum li'l deb'l. Den odde' black fella see deb'l doc-doc no mo', on'y one ahm. Deb'l by hole by wate' *kai-kai** deb'l doc-doc, no can *kai-kai* one ahm.

"Plenny odde' fella deb'l doc-doc make mad—plenny mad, all same fella marster cap'n one, two time. Dey catchum plenny li'l deb'l come out hole by wate', make die fo' plenny li'l deb'l by plenny smoke fire. Den too much big deb'l make plenny mad—oooh! mo' mad marster cap'n—he make plenny wate' stop along too much top. Wate' make hole in—in—" For want of words Sambo scooped out a large, bowl shaped hollow in the sand and, with his finger, made a small, deep hole in the exact center of it. It was plain enough that he meant the hole on the promontory where the sacrificial altar had stood. Sambo went on:

"Den too much deb'l, he talkum: 'Ooooh—wooooh! Wantum *kai-kai,* wantum *kai-kai* along fella black!' Fella deb'l doc-doc fright—too much fright. All fella deb'l doc-doc fright makum fire by hole, wantum make deb'l die by fire. Deb'l, he no die, him too much big. Him make along too much oooof! My word, too much ooof! Him *kai-kai* fire. Den he make wooooff—big woooff, make fire catchum deb'l doc-doc. Deb'l doc-doc plenny bu'n by fire, he no likum. Den he make big stone along hole, all same deb'l go ooof—woooff. Stone no good, wantum *kai-kai.*

"Deb'l doc-doc no likum make *kai-kai* he all same fella. He stop along catchum odde' fella black, makum by hole. Deb'l no likum. Him talkum, 'Ooof—woooff! Makum black fella die by fire fo' *kai-kai,* all same black fella make li'l deb'l die!' "

Sambo shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"Deb'l doc-doc make stone fo' die by fire. Make plenny black fella die. Deb'l likum. Him stop along *pan-pan.** All same plenny deb'l doc-doc make plenny black fella die by fire. No likum deb'l make ooof—woooff. All same deb'l no likum white fella-missy. Den he make big-big woof. Den time no mo' stone fo' die by fire. Deb'l doc-doc much fright. He savvy you deb'l. He make you look-see li'l deb'l die by fire, make you look-see ahm belong long time deb'l doc-doc. You no fright. Deb'l doc-doc no savvy you. Me savvy you no deb'l. You too much goot fella."

At that Bunk slapped me on the back.

"Say, you remember them bunches of squids which the devil doctors had on sticks when they tried to scare us off the first day?"

"Yes, I remember them," I replied. "And that mummified arm they shook under our noses too. I know just what's on your mind."

"Exactly," said Bunk. "That arm is all that was left of the devil priest who was killed by an octopus, Lord knows how many centuries ago. Those fellows sure had us marked down as the devils that belonged in that hole, because they brought them old relics out to let us see that they still remembered the old feud between devil an' devil doctor. That water comin' from the mountain, which Sambo was speakin' about, was the river before it found its present bed."

Sambo could have hardly understood more than half of Bunk's words, nevertheless he commented:

"You fella plenny savvy. Deb'l doc-doc no savvy you. Me savvy you plenny."

GOOD enough should have been let alone. Mac made the only mistake I ever knew him to be guilty of. He good naturedly gave his consent when Father Delaney approached the subject of directing his attention toward the heathen on the main island. And that was where a hornet's nest was then being

*Eat.

*Sleep.

foolishly stirred.

Taking three of its most devout converts with them as oarsmen and interpreters, our missionary society of three whites had made three trips to the beach of Vanua Lava on three consecutive evenings. Three times an elated preacher had returned, well pleased with the fertile soil he had discovered.

However, inclined toward pessimism as I was, I had forebodings. The powers that were priests as much as chiefs surely would not feel very amiable toward a man who threatened to become a rival and undermine their thrones. That is but human nature, and savages were quite human even if they were not humane.

While the party was ashore on the third evening I spoke of my apprehensions to Bunk. Bunk was inclined toward being a croaker even if he was not quite so bad as I.

"What's the Old Man an' Kennedy have to say about it?" said Bunk. "Did you give them a pow-wow on that lay?"

"I did," I answered. "Ken laughed at me, said it'd only turn out a big joke on the parson in the end. Mac said I was crazy."

"Yeah? Well, I'm on your side. Both Mac an' Ken know that you can't joke with niggers, if that's what they think this'll amount to. But I don't see anything else for you to do but to keep your weather eye open, an' I'll do the same."

"Yes," I snapped, "and that's exactly what I'll do tomorrow night. I'm going with them and look over the lay of the land. I wouldn't trust these Banks Islanders out of my sight. They may pretend to listen to all that preaching, but as soon as they find out that we are not the devils we made them believe we are, you can't tell what they're liable to be up to. Mac said so himself, and I don't know what's got into him all of a sudden. I think that preacher got him under a spell too. First thing you know he'll get converted himself."

The following evening I persuaded Mac to let me use one of the whaleboats instead of the gig, so that the shore party could be increased by four. Bunk and I were two of these four. Two more divers besides Father Delaney's regular volunteers I selected myself so as to have a sufficient number of oarsmen for the large boat. Sambo was one of the two. In these men I had more confidence than in the others, and could converse with them fairly well.

Bunk took the stroke oar to make it a six-oared crew and coached the blacks, who were not so expert at pulling a seaman-like stroke. I took the steering sweep and persuaded the missionary and Jean Bradley to sit in the bow. It was my only chance to have a heart to heart chat with Tom.

Of course, that made me the brunt of many jibes.

"Now I know he's jealous," said Kennedy at the rail when we were pushing off. "Tom better watch out. All-Hands, you ain't calculatin' to challenge Tom to a duel ashore, are you? Bunk, shoot him if he tries to start any carvin'. I see he's got his bush knife with him."

"I can preach better with that than with my tongue," I retorted, putting my finger to my nose.

On our way ashore Tom lost no time imparting most wonderful news. So wonderful indeed that I was glad I had gone on the trip.

"I've put a feather in my cap with the natives," he exulted. "The old gentleman, over there, was quite in accord with it. The next full moon the blacks won't have to be afraid of the howling devils in the hole."

Bunk raised his eyebrows, wondering what was to come.

"Real nice of you, Tom," I said expectantly. "What did you do?"

"Oh, just filled that hole on the hill with stones and dirt. At first it looked like a hopeless task because all the stones I threw in rolled down. It would have been a month's work, so then I threw some brush and rubbish down first, and then more stones and dirt

after that. It'll never be opened up again. Time and nature will do the rest. You'll never crawl through that chimney again, old boy!" he added, slapping me on the back.

Bunk groaned aloud. He was of the same mind as I.

"Good Lord! No wonder there's an old sailor's superstition about a woman an' a preacher on board a ship bringin' bad luck!" he growled.

"You did that, Tom?" I said. "Did you throw a stick of dynamite with each stone? You know all the stones we devils throw are supposed to explode."

"Come, come—" Tom tried to laugh that off. "We couldn't expect to keep that bally nonsense up forever. You know, the old gentleman said that you can't educate the black and bamboozle them all at the same time."

Bunk was so wrapped up in thought that his oar caught a crab. A clumsy thing for the stroke oarsman to do, but Bunk had good reason for his inattention to his work.

"Yeah, I suppose the old gentleman's right," he meditated. "But I'd rather take a chance with bamboozled blacks than with educated ones. Did you tell the skipper about this?"

"No, of course not. What would the skipper care about such things, anyway?"

"He'd care just this much about it," I concluded severely. "We got about another month of shell fishing ahead of us, and we might want to load some teak and ebony on the main island. Now, unbeknown to you, you've antagonized the devil doctors by making it impossible for them to work their old game of fooling the natives and keeping themselves in a soft berth. Lord knows what'll come out of this now."

WE WERE approaching the beach. It was fairly alive with blacks who awaited the coming of the man who could teach them how each individual could protect his body and spirit against voracious devils without the aid of devil doctors. Very laudable for a man to do such noble work, but dangerous . . .

There were plenty of joyously shouting natives to greet us on the beach. Almost half of them were women and children, but there was not one among them, I noticed at once, who bore marks of distinction. Bunk noticed it too.

"Tom," he said, watching my face for signs of apprehension, "have you seen any of the devil doctors at any of your revival meetin's?"

Tom laughed with scorn.

"Oh, come, you croakers. What can they do? They're only a few. The Parson has convinced his congregation that their domination has ended. We haven't seen any of them since the first night we had our interpreters tell the blacks what we were here for. I guess they're sulking in the bushes now."

"Yes, they're sulking, all right," I snorted. "Sulking among the mountain tribes, breeding mischief. Man, come to your senses! Count that congregation of converts. There's a bare hundred here. Only a fraction of the salt-water tribes. And the mountain fellows are always the worst to deal with."

Bunk pulled at my sleeve when we disembarked.

"Ain't love hell!" he grumbled in a hoarse whisper. "That little imp of a love god can shoot the damnedest arrow of 'em all!"

A half dozen filthy looking women gathered around Father Delaney, exhibiting babies of various ages and ailments. Evidently the good man had proven that he was a saviour of the body as well as the soul. The multitude watched with awed expectancy.

"Isn't it wonderful what a change you can observe in these people?" Jean Bradley smiled up at me as the congregation gathered for the evening's entertainment.

To Bunk and me it looked as if the natives regarded the whole procedure as just such.

"Miss Bradley," I replied, a little out

of sorts. "I know I'm often being laughed at for always seeing the black side of everything. But what makes you so sure that there isn't some sort of trick behind all this devotion? You people have had too much fair sailing to make me feel safe."

The girl looked at me in wide eyed surprise.

"That's him, Jeany," mocked Tom. "Always the calamity howler. Ask Bunk if that isn't what second mates are for, eh, Bunk?"

"They're good for something then," said Bunk, hitching his holsters more to the front.

"Why, Mr. All-Hands," Jean Bradley said. "The change in the natives is almost miraculous. Why, the first evening we landed here the poor creatures seemed afraid of those awful painted men, then Tom proved to them how they had been misled to worship that harmless hole on the hill. We haven't seen any of the painted men since the first evening, and the number which is coming down to the beach is doubling each evening. You see, uncle has convinced them that he can help them in their ailments. Just look!" she bubbled over with enthusiasm. "They are fairly worshiping him now. Not one of them is afraid to come near him."

The natives surely *were* worshiping the priest. However, when either Bunk or I took a casual step in their direction, suspicious eyes rolled at our belted pistols and bush knives, and the blacks shrank back. Furthermore, I noticed that the two divers I had selected stuck pretty close to my heels and that Father Delaney's interpreters felt rather nervous.

"Miss Bradley," I vented a growing suspicion, "do you think that the blacks who are gathered here this evening are the same ones who have been here before?"

The girl gave quite a surprised gasp at my question. Bunk grunted:

"You're on the right course, Matey. Hill devils!"

"Why, that question is almost impossible to answer," admitted Miss Bradley, scanning the babbling crowd. "They all look so much alike, but I am certain that some of them have been here before. That woman there, for instance—" she pointed at a terrible looking creature with a broad, white streak down her back and only stubs where fingers should have been on her hands. "Leprosy; an incurable case, uncle told me."

Tom shook me by the shoulder.

"Don't be afraid that we'll pick up something," he said mockingly.

"That's not what I'm thinking of," I almost barked at him. "They've sent down some awful looking specimens to keep our friend occupied, but there's some husky brutes in this crowd. I can tell by their feet that they're hillmen, high arched feet and pidgeon-toed instead of flat feet pointing straight ahead. I bet they've got weapons hidden in the bush."

I turned to Miss Bradley.

"Please do this. Ask your uncle to make this a short meeting because I'll have to go on board and see the captain. On these islands, Miss Bradley, a prolonged calm means a gathering storm."

Saying this, I walked a little distance away, followed by Bunk and the two divers who were like our shadows.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

"TOO much top fella?" I said to the divers, pointing at the mountains, then at the crowd.

Both divers nodded eagerly. One of them denoted dire apprehension by rolling his eyes and drawing his finger across his throat.

"Too much top fella," he whispered, repeating the strokes across his throat several times.

I understood. Bunk nodded too.

"Water boy fella no stop along?" I probed further.

Both blacks shrugged their shoulders.

"Water boy fella stop along—" the rest that was to be said was expressed by additional shrugs.

"Bunk," I said, "I've an idea that this Fête of the Full Moon business has been mostly staged by the hill tribes. The saltwater men, except their devil doctors, are more or less like slaves. The painted devils are gone to the hills, getting the tribes together, and they've got just a few of their gang down here to keep that parson busy until they're ready for the slaughter."

"No question about that," agreed Bunk.

The two divers meanwhile had held a short, excited conversation in their own tongue, then one of them pointed at Bunk's belted pistols.

"Too much top fella, catchum," he said, closing his fists and holding them in front of him as if he were pointing two pistols.

"Fella marster stop along," both of them whispered then, and motioned at the mangroves.

"They want one of us to stay here and keep the bushmen covered," I suggested to Bunk. "They want to show me something in the bush. You watch out till I come back, will you?"

"I get you," said Bunk. "But I don't like the idea of you goin' into the bush with them."

"These fellows are more afraid of the bushmen than we are. If they thought the danger was so near at hand they wouldn't want to go in themselves. After this none of the divers can go back to their tribe and they want to make themselves solid with us now so we'll take 'em with us."

"Maybe you're right," assented Bunk. "Well, find out what they've got to show you, but don't be long. It'll soon be dark—an' Lord knows I'll watch out."

I nodded at the bush and both blacks immediately led the way. I was urged more by curiosity than by the thought that my tour of investigation might reveal something useful.

With my guides trotting confidently ahead I soon found myself upon the familiar path through the canebrakes. But instead of following the long curve which led up the hill to the west, they swept aside some stalks and vines at the left and disclosed a similar path, leading almost due south. My guides seemed to be on familiar ground, for they did not waste any time feeling their way.

But when the canebrakes began to blend with tall, gnarled bushes on both sides of the path they came to a sudden stop. By the rolling of their eyes and the signs they made I gathered that here extreme caution was necessary. A pitfall, I conjectured. And such there was in that vicinity. Though the path seemed to continue southward, the guides opened one of the peculiar decoy screens on the left and led me upon another path which ran east for a short distance, then swung back to the south.

About five hundred yards they led. The path did not appear to differ from the rest except that its floor bore signs of more frequent usage. Also the thicket at both sides grew higher and denser as we advanced. The ground ahead was sloping upward.

At last we came upon a large clearing. A native village!

Despite the gathering dusk there was light enough to take in the entire panorama from where we stopped at the head of the jungle path. The clearing must have been more than three-quarters of a mile in length and about half a mile in width. Somewhat of an oval in outline. At its southwesterly border was a roaring, shallow brook, racing over rocks and step-like cascades. A tributary of the river, the guides gave me to understand. Out of the deep jungle it emerged as though to enjoy a half-mile run in the open, then again to lose itself in the darkness of the forest. Beyond the brook, starting at its very bank and crowding up the slope of the mountain, was black, dense forest. Above the forest the mountains rose into a gray haze.

A LITTLE way to the east of the path where we stood was a long, low, thatched building, similar to the one I had been in on the High Place. This building was the *kamal*, the clubhouse, the abode for the unmarried warriors. To the south of the *kamal* were rows of small thatch huts. East of those were fields of yam and taro and a few straggling huts.

A quaint, rustic landscape this must have been when bathed in sunshine. A weird deserted scene it presented in the dusk. For in the whole settlement there was not a sign of life.

My guides confronted me with nervous shrugs of their shoulders. Then one of them swept the village with a dramatic gesture.

"Wate' boy fella no stop along," he said, nodding his head meaningly. "Too much he fella stop along too much top fella."

There was the whole story in a nutshell. My apprehensions were well founded.

To make sure that their own charges would not be contaminated by the dangerous white imposter, the crafty devil doctors had herded them, men, women and children, into the hills. No doubt they had not encountered any difficulty in persuading their old enemies, the chiefs of the hill tribes, to unite with them in a concerted attack upon a foe common to all. A detachment of hillmen, who could be relied upon not to be influenced by the white man's interpreters, had been sent down with women and children as decoys to hold the white interloper on the beach. Possibly they had hoped to lure the entire ship's crew ashore, through peaceful demonstration, to await the swarms from the mountains. Then the grand massacre.

Just how the many mixed tribes would settle about the trophies of victory among themselves if they would succeed was more than I could figure out. Possibly such minor details did not worry the chiefs until they had been arrived at.

My worries were how to persuade my party to steal into the boat before it was too late. The others besides Bunk and me did not have as much as a jack-knife for a weapon. I wondered whether the natives on the beach knew it.

One of my guides soon reminded me that any other place would do just as well for meditation.

"Fella marster stop along," he said, plucking impatiently at my sleeve.

I did not require more urging. We retraced our steps more hastily than we had come. It was almost completely dark by the time we broke from the thicket into the lower canebrakes. Now the guides were watching for something they seemed to know would appear in our rear. Every ten or fifteen paces they took, they looked over their shoulders. Suddenly they came to a halt. One of them pointed at the southern sky. I, too, stopped and strained my eyes.

Faintly visible in the darkness, about four miles southwest of us, rose three, then four, then five pillars of white smoke!

"Too much top fella stop along bimeby!" the guides explained hastily. Then they motioned for me to hurry.

Bunk stood with drawn pistols.

"Where the hell have you been?" he whispered with a note of relief. "I thought you were to be gone only a minute. Here you've been nearly half an hour."

"I've been all the way to the village of the nearest tribe," I explained. "Funny way of telling a fellow what they had to say. Why, man, the whole village is deserted as if a pest had wiped out the tribe."

"That's enough," snapped Bunk. "These fellows made up their minds that they can convince you better than tell you. But how the hell did they know, I wonder."

"Guess they knew from previous experience that the first sign of them being

on the warpath is a deserted village. They wanted to make sure that I'd get the thing straight, and that I'd see the pillars of smoke."

Bunk's eyebrows went up.

"Smoke! Where? Far away?"

"'Bout four miles inland. You can't see it from here. We're too low and the bushes are in the way. But I saw it from the path. White smoke, five pillars of it. Maybe more by now."

"'Nough said!" snapped Bunk. "They'll be here in half an hour, an' they'll just flop out of the bush as noiseless as a cloud. That's their game: just swamp our gang there on the beach before there's a chance to even yell out. Then the whole swarm's goin' to sneak over to the ship before any one on board gets wise that there's something in the wind. Come on. That sky pilot will have to lay to right now."

"Easy, now," I admonished. "We'll have to sneak our crowd to the boat before these bushmen can make a run for their weapons. If there's a tussle somebody's liable to get hurt. These bushmen've been instructed not to let the preacher get away even if the ship should get alarmed."

A CURIOUS scene was spread before us. Children were lying prone upon the sand, beside their kowtowing mothers. All the savages were kneeling and salaaming, pressing their foreheads upon the sand at every bow. At the rim of the thick circle of bobbing, sweating blacks knelt Jean Bradley and Tom. Their hands were clasped together.

In the midst of it all stood Father Delaney. His hands were upraised. In a solemn voice, which shook with emotion he was pronouncing blessings. He knew very well that the savages did not understand a word of what he said, but as long as they proved themselves such stout devotees, he seemed to have no intention of bringing the service to an end.

In dealing with hypocrites he certainly was an amateur, otherwise he should have suspected that such extreme devotion to something that was not even understood could not be sincere. But neither Bunk nor I was a judge of such things.

I instructed the men who had guided me. They were getting quite nervous.

"Catchum along two, three dive fella. You fella altogether stop along boat."

The men nodded eagerly. With a facility which was almost uncanny they singled their three mates out of that maze of similar, bowing figures. Only a few signs of warning were necessary and, without stopping their bowing, the three wormed their way out of the circle without arousing any suspicion. When clear of the throng, they leaped to their feet and scampered toward the boat.

Only then the other blacks began to suspect that something was not going according to schedule. Evidently they had not quite decided whether this was not part of the white man's ceremony. They did not wish to arouse the prospective victim's suspicions, so they made several more half hearted bows, but their faces were turned sidewise, the eyes of some of them on the missionary, the eyes of others upon the boat.

Bunk stood guard, both of his pistols trained upon the blacks closest to the bush. It seemed to me that some of them were creeping sidewise while they continued their half bows. I stepped forward and gripped Tom by the shoulder.

"What do you mean—?"

"Shut up! Run for the boat!"

Just then the pretenders saw the five divers push the boat into deeper water. Instantly the mass was on its feet. Then things happened quickly.

I heard two shots ring out. Two figures dropped with piercing yells. Came a brief moment of suspended activity, then a wild stampede toward the bush.

"Bless my soul!" I heard the missionary shout. In the next moment he and Tom, on either side of the girl, were running toward the boat.

Bunk was at my side as we ran.

"Hold your fire for the first one that comes," he shouted as we pushed off.

We had not acted a second too soon. Our five divers, now scared beyond reason, were already lashing the water with the oars. Black figures were running toward us. Arms were flung backward with poised spears and a few bows were already being spanned, but our pistols dropped the most formidable of the aggressors.

By the time the boat had cleared the water's edge a good fifty feet, the whole horde—I am sure that half of the women were among them—charged waistdeep into the water.

Fortunately the sudden turn in the events, the derangement of the carefully planned program, had thrown the savages into such a state of confusion that in the ensuing excitement they hampered each other's efforts to take proper aim. Also, since most of them were bushmen, a number of them stumbled and fell forward as soon as the water reached above their knees. Nevertheless some of the spears and arrows came very close to the mark. If our oarsmen had not had some previous experience with the sweeps, which were so different from the crude paddles they used in their canoes, we would not have escaped. At best it was a close shave.

WHEN the savages finally had to give up the chase, their howls of rage were terrible. And these howls as well as our shots had been heard somewhere else.

From somewhere, not much more than a mile beyond the border of the bush, came an answering call which sounded as if given by a thousand voices!

Father Delaney had slumped down upon a thwart. His face looked ashen in the darkness.

"The treacherous ingrates!" he moaned, staring bewildered at the splashing black figures which were now retreating toward the beach, howling and lamenting their predicament. "How did this happen?"

"How'd it happen!" roared Bunk, his anger suddenly flaring up. "You sit there an' ask how it happened? I'll tell you how. It happened through your monkeyin' with the devil doctors' hash. That's how!"

Tom laid his hand on Bunk's arm.

"Easy, easy, Bunk," he admonished. "Remember you're not talking to a sailor. The gentleman meant well."

"You shut up, you—!" snarled Bunk. He remembered in time that there was a lady present. "You didn't have sense enough to leave good enough alone. You'll hear from the skipper when we get on board."

Tactless speech that was, to throw the blame for failure upon the shoulders of the man she loved before a woman. Jean Bradley had dropped beside Tom. Her face was buried in her hands; she was sobbing hysterically. Suddenly she raised her tear stained face to Bunk. Her eyes were flashing daggers. She was a woman true to color.

"If you and that horrible mate of yours had not interfered this thing would not have happened," she flared like a little tigress. "That mate of yours! All he needs is a red kerchief wound around his head and he would be the incarnation of a pirate. He's always swaggering around with his pistols and cutlass. I've begun to hate the sight of him. What did he take these two poor creatures into the bush for? I saw it all. He got on the nerves of the natives. The women were frightened to death. Of course the men began to think there was some treachery afoot. Otherwise they wouldn't have attacked."

Father Delaney was patting the girl's hand soothingly.

"Jeany, Jeany!" he admonished mildly.

But he could not stem that fit of temper. I just had to take all that was coming to me. At last, when the passionate words gave way to sobs, I found

my chance for retaliation.

"Oh, wouldn't they have attacked, miss?" I demanded sarcastically. "Why do you think they kept their weapons in the bush?"

"That's easily explained," Tom sided in with the girl. "Those fellows always carry weapons with them, and they put them out of sight because they felt that such things hardly fitted into a meeting of the sort they were attending. If they came with bad intentions, why did they wait so long?"

"There, now!" emitted Jean Bradley, squeezing Tom's hand affectionately.

Bunk just roared at Tom's theory.

"Oh, blessed innocence!" He laughed indulgently. "Just let's drop all this squabblin'. But I think I could name several reasons why the niggers did not get goin' right away.

"They knew that the beach is visible from the atoll by daylight an' anything unusual happenin' on the beach might be observed an' reported to the ship by those divers who've settled there. Those divers know that they can't go back to their tribe since they've fallen for religion which their chiefs have made a *tambo*.* You watch; when we're ready to leave here they'll beg us to take 'em along as blackbirds rather than be left here where they'll lose their heads. That crowd back there in the woods wanted to wait till after dark an' then make sure that you wouldn't even get the chance to cry out . . . "

Father Delaney looked slightly skeptical as yet.

"Bless me, my friend," he gasped. "Do you mean to say that they would think it necessary to bring the whole island to arms to take three captives?"

"I don't mean that at all," argued Bunk. "That crew on the beach was to keep you occupied so you wouldn't have known you were trapped till the others would have you throttled. Mind you, one cry might have sent the alarm to the ship, an' they were after the ship since they know now that we're only human. That's why they wanted to be sure to have a big swarm on hand before they'd start anything. They ain't so keen about attackin' a big ship with about thirty men shootin' from behind bulwarks. For such work they want overwhelmin' numbers comin' like a bolt out of a clear sky."

There was a minute of silence while this was pondered over. Then Tom said—

"Strikes me that they would have kept their horde close at hand, if what you say is the case."

"No, won't do," Bunk replied. "The chiefs were not goin' to take any chances with a big crowd, made up of several tribes, lyin' in ambush for any length of time. They'd get impatient an' some noise might be made. Then those interpreters, who they knew you had with you, might smell a rat. When the swarm is on the hunt it's a different matter. Then they can keep calm because they're all tension."

The missionary sat shaking his head mournfully while Jean Bradley and Tom stared at Bunk.

"I think you're right about that, Bunk," I broke the silence. "You see, they didn't start their smoke signals until just about dark. White smoke, you know. You can see it for a few miles when you're in the dark ashore, but not when there's a mile of water between you and the smoke. Those devils had everything planned with care."

Another moment of silence. Then, as we were about to swing into the inlet of the lagoon, Tom mused:

"Bad business, all this. I wonder what will happen next."

"Happen next!" I echoed. "I'll tell you what's happening right now. That bunch that was on the beach with you folks is being made a head shorter, every man and maybe half the women of 'em, for letting us get away."

Bunk chuckled. Jean Bradley shuddered and shrank farther away from me.

*Melanesian for tabu—forbidden.

"Ugh! Must you always think of such terrible things?" she murmured. "The poor creatures! It was not their fault. If only something could be done for them."

Was not that just like a woman?

CHAPTER XIX

AN UNHEEDED WARNING

WE HAILED the ship as soon as we rounded into the lagoon.

"Hello!" came Mac's voice. "What was all the racket an' the shootin' about? We heard it clear out here."

"Bushmen have broken loose," I responded.

All the whaleboats were hauled alongside. Every man carried a rifle.

"Hell!" ejaculated Mac as we drew alongside. "More trouble. I thought things were runnin' too smooth to last. Any damage done?"

"None. But we had a mighty close shave. But we won't be able to load any wood on the island, that's certain."

"I don't give a damn about that," responded Mac with some relief. "As long as you didn't lose any of the divers."

He spoke to the missionary, who was shaking like an aspen leaf as he climbed on board.

"Now, mister, you see what you've done? You should have kept your hands off after your first experience with them blacks. How did this thing start anyway?"

This question was addressed to me. My full report of the whole affair was soon made.

"I'm sorry, Captain Mac—" Father Delaney came forward. "I thought I might help you a little by putting some sense into the natives. But I fear I've made a grave msitake. It seems these men are hopeless."

"Huh," grunted Mac disgustedly. "I've known lots of you fellows to make mistakes. But it was my own fault to let you go so far. Should have told you to keep away from that shore, but I thought we had the fellows too scared of us to start trouble. Well, thank God it wasn't worse."

Suddenly he spun around at Tom, who stood inconspicuously in the shadow of the cabin. Mac shook a warning finger at him.

"After this, young man, you take your orders only from me an' the mates. I don't want to hear any more about these unnecessary risks. This is a tradin' ship, not a floatin' educational institution for the enlightenment of the heathen."

"You fellows on anchor watch tonight better keep your weather eye open," warned Kennedy, addressing the men who were leaning on their guns. "All the rest of you keep your rifles in your bunks for the night."

Mac pondered over this for awhile. Then he said:

"It's all right to be cautious, Kennedy, but there ain't one chance in a thousand of us bein' surprised. Those bushmen ain't so keen about paddlin' a mile at sea on a dark night."

Bunk could not stand for having his theory, that an attack on the ship had been planned for the night, go to smash.

"I'll bet anything, Skipper, that they figured on comin' out tonight," he said. "If they could have took us without you gettin' wise, you'd have 'em on your hands by now."

Mac was quite willing to modify his statement.

"Hold your horses, Bosun," he said. "I didn't mean it like that. I meant that they won't come out now since we know that they're on the warpath. You fellows did good work, an' so did them divers, bless their black hides."

"Here they are. D'you want to embrace 'em?" Kennedy grinned as he pointed at the five dark figures that had brazenly climbed on board. "You fella no stop along shore?" he bellowed at the blacks.

The poor fellows slunk close to the rail. They seemed to be terribly frightened.

"Too much top fella, too much top fella," they wailed, making no effort to go over the rail.

"Oh, let them stay on board for the night an' make their beds under the focsle head," chuckled Mac. "We can't let them take one of our boats, an' their canoes are on the atoll. The tide's comin' in an' they're afraid of the sharks. This place is always lousy with sharks when the tide is makin'. What chance would they stand swimmin' on a dark night like this?"

At that the missionary put his hand on Mac's shoulder.

"Captain Mac, you're a kind hearted man," he said gently. "You've treated me—"

"Stow that, man," Mac cut him off gruffly, nevertheless he gave him a jovial slap on the back. "Come on below an' steady your nerves with a bracer of scotch."

DAYLIGHT came. I stepped to the rail and surveyed the palm fringed beach of the lagoon. As always, the divers' canoes lay bottom up beside the thatch hovels they had built for themselves, but as yet not one of the divers was about.

"Funny," I mused. "All the excitement of last night must have scared them fellows so they hardly dare to come out of their huts."

Kennedy came to my side. Bunk and Cockney, cracking jokes at each other, followed shortly.

"Well," said Kennedy, stretching himself, "so we didn't get massacred last night after all, eh? Kind o' disappointin' to find yourself wakin' up still this side o' paradise. But what's the matter with your boys, All-Hands? They're gettin' lazy on you. Tide's runnin' out good."

The outgoing tide was the most propitious time for shell diving, since the lagoon then was practically devoid of sharks.

"Blimme if that ain't strikin' me funny this mornin," commented Cockney. "Other times I wouldn't think anything of it, but since last night—"

He hitched his belt and looked at us as if he expected some explanation.

The five blacks came from under the forecastle head and grinned at us sheepishly.

"Let's man one of the boats an' find out whether the devils have jumped ship on us," suggested Kennedy. "Give these fellows we got on board a little more rowin' exercise."

"All right," agreed Bunk. "You fellows get the boat ready an' I'll fetch up guns for Cockney an' me."

"Hell, there won't be anything to shoot at," I ridiculed the idea of bothering about guns.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that," Kennedy put in earnestly. "You've been doin' so much croakin', an' with such good reason, now I'll do a little of it myself. Something's wrong there ashore. You don't know what's hidin' back of the trees. Let's find out. Get your guns anyway."

Cautiously we approached the beach. Our black oarsmen were visibly nervous. We waited a few minutes and listened. It was dead calm. Not a palm leaf stirred. The mirror-like surface of the lagoon began to glow under the slanting rays of the rising sun like molten copper. Lazily the keel of our boat heaved and crunched upon the soft sand with every lift and drop of the light swell. Nature was displayed at its gentlest. It was the sort of scene which would lure even the least adventurous.

Not a living thing seemed to be on the little island.

"Let's chance it," whispered Kennedy. Cockney and I nodded our consent. "Bunk," said Kennedy, "you better stick by the boat an' keep your eyes on everything, even these blacks we got here."

The five blacks attempted to disembark with us. I pushed them back.

"He fella, my word! He too much along pop-pop!" I stilled their excitement, pointing at Bunk and his gun.

The blacks felt a little more at ease when they saw that Bunk was to remain with them, with his rifle trained upon the thatch huts.

Cautiously we approached the nearest of the huts. Kennedy and Cockney stood guard while I got down on hands and knees and crawled to the single opening which served as entrance. It was but two feet high. I thrust the barrel of my pistol past the edge of the opening, listened again. No one stirred within.

Tapping the dry thatch with the weapon, I made the first conspicuous sound since we had landed. No response.

Something surely was wrong. Either there was some creature ready to spring at the first head to show, or the hut was empty. As an additional precaution I drew my bush knife and made several quick thrusts through the thatch. Once the point struck something soft which yielded—like flesh. But even then not a rustle within could be heard. Then, like a flash, I looked in and at once withdrew my head.

That fleeting glance had been enough to make my skin creep.

"Good Lord!" I groaned, aloud this time, for there was no danger lurking within. Then I stuck my head through the opening and remained as if hypnotized for awhile.

Sprawled out upon the leaf covered sand were the beheaded bodies of two of our divers!

"Two—come and look for yourselves," I croaked at my companions. "To think that we were so near the shore and never heard a sound!"

Kennedy and Cockney did not linger long over the gruesome sight. One quick glance and they cast caution to the winds. They ran from hut to hut, recoiling from each with shaking heads and grimaces expressing horrified amazement. Only two of the fifteen flimsy shelters were found empty. One of the other thirteen contained only one body. All but the five of our divers who had stayed on board during the night had been butchered and mutilated.

Lucky boys, those five! Had we given them a chance to explain their premonition, this would not have happened.

For awhile we three stood staring at each other, each waiting for the others to answer an unspoken question.

"Twenty-five of 'em!" Cockney shuddered as if the audacity of the crime had only just dawned upon him. "I wonder what that was for? Since they went that far an' done it without gettin' nabbed, it's a wonder they didn't try to board us."

"Beats me." Kennedy shrugged. "But I've sort of suspicion that the whole thing was done by landin' on the south shore of the atoll. They didn't care to bring their canoes into the lagoon. Sort of figured we'd be on the lookout for them. The first night after the trouble ashore anyway. But they surely made a success of keepin' us from doin' much divin'. If that's what they meant to do."

"No doubt about that," I decided. "But do you think the devils are still hiding on the atoll?"

Kennedy's expert eyes surveyed the bare trunks of the coconut palms. He shook his head dubiously.

"Not thick enough growth for hidin'," was his verdict. "From where we're standin' here we can see through to the bay in front of Vanua. See that?" He pointed south. "There's the peak of the volcano loomin' up right through the trees. These atolls fool you when you see 'em from a half-mile distance."

"Sure do." Cockney shook himself out of his spell. "But all the same, let's get out of this. Them murderin' devils didn't leave that half dozen canoes o' them divers on the beach for us to look at from the ship."

"Right you are, Cockney—"

But what could have been the object of the apparent inactivity on the part of the natives at that moment? If the canoes were left on the beach to throw us off our guard, to lure us ashore, why

was there not some sort of demonstration now, since we had deliberately walked into the trap? This making signs in riddles was getting on my nerves.

"It beats me," Kennedy said when we walked back to the boat. "I've dealt with natives for many years, but these fellows here act different from any I ever came across."

"WHAT'S happened?" demanded Bunk when we came up. "I saw you fellows chasin' round like scared rabbits."

Kennedy spread his hands.

"All the divers but these five there with their heads gone," he exploded, with a searching frown at the lucky five. "I'm afraid this place might soon be too hot for us to do much work."

"Holy Moses! An' the watch didn't catch any of it?" ejaculated Bunk. "Let's get on board."

We took care that the remaining blacks should not learn the truth. We made them hurry to get the boat off the sand. To learn of the massacre might unnerve them so that they would be of no more use, and five, at least, were better than none. Of course, they suspected from our actions that something had gone wrong, but, judging from their indifference and their grins of relief, they suspected nothing more serious than that their comrades had deserted.

"Pull along ship," I ordered them harshly.

They obeyed, jabbering excitedly. I presume they were telling each other what a rich harvest they would reap now since their number had shrunken.

"Spoiled the rest of the trip for us, that damn preacher!" exploded Mac when he received our report. "Fine thanks we get for savin' a fellow's life."

"Yeah, that's just the trouble with all those fellows," growled Kennedy. "They're brought up with the belief that they know more than others. What this fellow deserves is being put ashore among the devils so he can try his theory a little more until they fry him. I bet even now he ain't convinced that he can't get by with all his bunk."

"Right you are," snorted Mac, pounding the rail with his fist. "But we got to put up with him here on board. Van Asvelt would maroon him on that island if he were in my place. An' what wouldn't happen to that girl!" he added significantly. Then he suddenly swung around at Tom, who was crestfallen.

"You—you young fool! If you'd kept your nose out of monkeyin' with the devil doctors' business— Well, anyhow, if it hadn't been for you we wouldn't been on this trip, an' it's brought some returns at least." He calmed down considerably. "We'll have to get along with five divers. Some of you fellows—you, All-Hands, for instance—are not so bad at deep diving. We'll have to risk white meat on the sharks. Can't leave too much shell on the bottom here."

Poor Tom felt as if he would have liked to jump overboard. His own trip, which had saved him from the gutter! Here he was almost making a failure of it.

"Captain," he blurted. "I know I wouldn't be any use at diving, but the way I've blundered things up I'm willing to sneak to the beach at night and get some divers by the Van Asvelt method."

"I'll be with you, Tom," Cockney put in.

For a moment Mac regarded Tom with an air of sober appraisal. Then he burst out laughing.

"I guess your religion ain't sunk very deep, young fellow," he chided. "Don't let that girl of yours hear you talk like that. But it couldn't be done now. The blacks are on their guard. You can't sneak into the village an' shanghai them."

"It sure is hell," said Kennedy. "An' everything was runnin' smooth, too. What do you think we ought to do about them carcasses ashore? Leave 'em for the vultures?"

Mac raised both hands in horror.

"No!" he protested vehemently. "For Pete's sake, no. When the divin' crews

are busy, have a boat go ashore an' dump the bodies into the lagoon. But, man, be careful that the natives don't catch you doin' it. It'd be the end of their nerve."

That day we did not add so much to our stock in trade. Bunk and I with two of the forecastle hands volunteered as divers. At ten o'clock the tide started to run in. By noon scores of ominous fins could be seen in the neck of the lagoon. Then two of the white divers quit.

"No divin' work for us, wid them devils around," they grumbled, climbing into their boats.

Bunk stuck to me. It left only seven of us "bottom rakers".

But it seemed as if the devil doctors had bewitched the water for miles around. By the time the tide was half high, the conditions became intolerable even for the blacks. The finned monsters now were so audacious that the boat crews could no longer fight them off.

In a tussle, which almost turned out my last, I managed to slit the belly of one. Then, as I swam to the boat and saw two more fins bearing down upon me, I had enough of that. I signaled all the boats to return to the ship.

"It's the bodies what brought 'em in," said Kennedy. "We had a right to dump 'em on the outside beach. The devils can scent blood for miles. I guess our trip is over."

"We can try again tomorrow, when the tide is out," I suggested.

"Take us a year to get much shell that way," growled Cockney. "If it wasn't for the girl I'd bust that parson's nose. A parson on a ship! Blimme if it ain't bad luck."

THE next morning I was awakened by something which sounded like distant wails. My first impression was that I had been hearing the plaintive voices in a dream, for before I could fully collect my thoughts my subconscious self had caught sight of a beach upon which naked, black figures were hacking at each other's throats.

But full consciousness found me still listening. Then I realized that the sounds had not been the imagination of a troubled mind. Plainly I heard the wails coming from the deck. With both feet at once I was out of my bunk and rushed for the companionway.

Amidships at the rail stood the two men who had the last anchor watch. They were staring at the beach like frozen images. Dawn had just begun to break. Objects in the distance were still somewhat indistinct.

A little farther forward were two of our blacks. They were gesticulating as if they tried to drive something from them. From them came the weird wails. As soon as they caught sight of me they evaded the watchmen's effort to keep them from rushing aft.

"Too much top fella, too much top fella," they whimpered as they ran, all the time gesticulating toward the beach.

One glance in the indicated direction was all I needed. I too stared as if petrified.

Driven into the sand, about halfway between the thatch hovels and the water's edge, stood three bamboo poles about ten feet high. Speared lengthwise upon each pole, feet dangling about five feet above the sand, was the headless body of a native! The six canoes had disappeared . . .

The two blacks kept up their wails.

"Shut up mouth belong you!" I rapped at them. They crouched under the rail.

The watchmen came toward me, their faces haggard.

"My God! How did this happen?" I groaned. "And why?"

"How'd it happen, an' when?" croaked one of them.

The missing canoes brought the flash of an idea.

"Black fella along you," I yelled at the frightened blacks, holding up first two, then five fingers.

As a reply came a renewed outburst

of wails and a shaking of heads.

"It's the three others," I expressed my premonition to the watchmen. "They were the three whom the parson's been using as interpreters. But how the devil did the cutthroats get hold of 'em?"

I rushed below and roused Mac and Kennedy, but in the excitement I made so much noise that the whole afterguard, including our passengers, was awakened and came filing out on deck.

"Well, I'll be damned!" swore Mac at the first glance ashore. "I guess we're at the end of our rope. This means that the blacks mean business!"

Jean Bradley gave a stifled cry of alarm the minute her eyes fell upon the spectacle. Then she turned her head and walked to the other side, leaning over the rail as if she feared her stomach would give way.

"My God!" groaned Father Delaney. "Those beasts! What do they mean by such brutality?"

The others simply stared as if fascinated by the sight. Mac said:

"They mean this, Mister Parson: that in the future you should keep your fingers out of any devil doctors' business. Let all this be a lesson to you."

Kennedy scanned the deck. The whole crew had been aroused by the commotion and was crowding to the rail. Now my previous premonition was verified. The other three blacks were not to be seen. Surely they had no reason for hiding, and the commotion would have awakened them if they had tried to sleep.

"Black fella belong you?" demanded Kennedy of the two who were cowering nearby, pointing at the mutilated bodies.

The blacks nodded and commenced their howling again.

"Mouth belong you stop!" I barked at them. "What make along shore?"

Both shrugged their shoulders, then imitated swimming motions.

"Fella belong *cana*," they wailed, shrugged again and rolled their eyes.

"They tried to get their canoes," Mac paraphrased the incoherent words and signs. "These fools would stick their fingers between runnin' winch gears to pick out a penny. That's why the canoes were left on the beach yesterday. They had no hope of trappin' your landin' party yesterday, Kennedy, but they knew that sooner or later they'd get the other divers with the bait."

Kennedy nodded thoughtfully.

"They sure got that three, an' I bet they kicked like hell because it wasn't five. But what stumps me is why they planted 'em there. Does it mean for us to get out an' be quick about it?"

"Exactly that, an' that's all there's left for us to do," snapped Mac. "If they tried to get our goats so's we come after them, they missed, because I know damn well that by now even the beach on the island is mantrapped."

"Nice windup!" commented Bunk.

Father Delaney looked startled.

"Did I understand you to infer that you will have to abandon your work here, sir?" he queried tremulously.

For awhile Mac's mien and manner betrayed all the signs of a violent eruption. But he said, succeeding to an admirable degree in choking down his exasperation:

"Yes, yes. That's the time you understood me right, mister. But have no fear, I ain't goin' to leave you behind. Mister—" he added, his voice rising as the thought of having to abandon some unfinished business robbed him of a little of his self-control—"how the hell do you think we can work here in a lagoon full of sharks, hungry for white meat, an' watch all night to keep the kind of devils that can sneak off a ship, right under the noses of a wide awake watch, from stealin' on board? What would we do if our water supply runs short? There are no springs on a coral atoll, mister, an' we can't get any from the island. Even if we tried, the chances are that the devils have poisoned the stream with the carcasses of dead crocs an' snakes. Have you any suggestion that might help us, mister?"

I knew from past experience that

when Mac emphasized the "mister" several times in his speech, it was about time to watch one's words and actions. It was a sign that his patience was at an end. The missionary evidently had recognized the danger signal.

"Bless my soul, Captain," he stammered apologetically, "I couldn't possibly suggest an alternative."

"Well, then, be thankful that you've come off alive an' that you'll be taken back where you belong."

CHAPTER XX

THE ATTACK

KENNEDY was scanning the sky, then made an estimate of the tide.

"Ain't goin' to have fair wind till late in the afternoon, sir, an' it won't be high water till nearly eleven o'clock," he announced his decision.

The crew sauntered back to the forecastle to enjoy one more smoke before breakfast and hard work. Mac surveyed the rigging, glanced at the boats moored astern.

"Nothin' else to keep us, Kennedy," he grunted. "Tide an' wind is the least of our trouble in gettin' out. We'll tow out shortly after high water. We got the soundin's an' there's plenty of water in the channel till pretty near low water. After the men have had their chow gather all the shell that's on the sandbank. We'll let it rot out on deck. Then shake out the canvas an' stow all the boats we don't need for towin'. Four boats will be enough. We'll take the two blacks with us and sell them to some planter."

Four boats with sixteen well manned oars is not much propulsive power for a four-hundred-ton bark. Every oarsman had to put all his energy into muscle to drag sixteen feet of draft and thirty-three feet of beam through the water at the rate of two knots. But a vessel could not be permitted to drift at the mercy of a strong tide. She had to have steerage way, for the channel through the inlet of the lagoon was a bare two hundred feet at its widest. On both sides it was flanked by dangerous coral shoals over which the strong tide swirled and eddied. To maneuver a vessel through such dangerous waters took good seamanship. During the maneuver all else had to be disregarded; the whole ship's crew was then off its guard.

That day was to teach us what clever generals were apt to spring out of the ranks of those we call ignorant savages. With what thoroughness they can lay their plans. With what patience they can abide their time to strike!

A hundred-foot line, leading forward from the starboard cathead, a similar line from the port. Two boats in tandem straining on each line. The oarsmen singing . . .

Thus the bark's stem cut the smooth surface of the lagoon, heading for a place where ripples and small whirlpools marked the beginning of the outward flow of all the waters of the lagoon. Bunk sat on the capstan, on the forecastle head, way forward, passing the orders from aft to the oarsmen. Sometimes the order was to pull more to starboard, sometimes to port. The rest of the afterguard was on the quarterdeck. The man at the helm had little to do, for the ship was practically steered by the oarsmen as they responded to the commands which Bunk passed to them.

Even our passengers were on deck to enjoy the rare sight which even in the late seventies was seldom seen anywhere but on primitive lagoons—a scene which takes one's mind back to the days before steam.

Three white men, those of the crew who were held in reserve to relieve tired oarsmen occasionally, and the two blacks were lounging on the maindeck.

Now we were headed due north. Over the starboard bow lay a little sand islet which was flanking the east side of the lagoon's outlet. Over the port bow lay the palm clad western point. Kennedy pointed thither.

"I never saw young palms grow up so fast," he remarked casually. "When we towed in here you could see daylight through that growth. Now you can hardly see any sand a couple of yards beyond the water's edge."

"Out of the hurricane season," commented Mac. "This atoll ain't been swept for some time. That gives that stuff a chance to spring up almost overnight."

"How interesting!" cried Jean Bradley. "An atoll seems like a regular paradise."

"It ain't no paradise if you can't get grub or water," Mac said. "You'd soon get sick of nothin' but coconuts."

"Yes, and if there're no savages to keep you awake nights," I added by way of a joke.

"Croaker!" snapped Tom. "You got to spoil everything."

We were caught by the current, gathered headway. The ship's bow yawed to port.

"Port oars!" bellowed Mac.

"Port oars!" came Bunk's voice like an echo.

"Steady!"

The oarsmen were in good spirits. Why shouldn't they be jolly? A hundred and fifty tons of pearl shell, a few very valuable pearls and more than half a ton of bird's nests was not such a bad haul. The men's song could be heard aft.

The shore and the palms were now racing astern. Four knots, five knots—even faster were we speeding. We were in the grip of the tide, and the outlet of a lagoon is like a millrace during the ebb.

Only a high powered tugboat or a half-gale could have held a sailing vessel against the mad current. The oarsmen rowed at their best to keep the towlines taut, for this was the critical place where the vessel had to be kept under control. Too much swing to starboard or to port might make her swerve on to a shoal, and if that should happen during the ebbing tide it would surely mean disaster.

The blue sea lay ahead. The last of the palms were racing past our bow. Then the joyful chantey changed to cries of alarm. Too late . . .

With a chorus of piercing yells, which reechoed from the wooded shore, scores of sharp prowed canoes laden to the gunwales with armed blacks were shooting into the racing current! We were cut off on a paradise-like uninhabited atoll.

LIKE a school of blackfish, straight for our leading boats, dashed the attacking canoes. The towlines went slack, for the oarsmen had ceased rowing at the first sign of danger. With oars—the only weapons they had on hand—raised for defense, they crouched below the gunwales to escape the hail of bone tipped arrows which came with the attack.

Bunk shouted wildly for a rifle. Tom, Kennedy and I rushed below to grab armfuls of weapons from the racks. Jean shrieked with fright at the suddenness of the turn of events. Father Delaney groaned with dismay.

The whole ship, drifting down upon the boats by sheer momentum of her great mass, was in an uproar. The cook came from the galley and grabbed a rifle from me as I passed. The others, Mac, the helmsman, the three seamen, all snatched rifles from our arms while we ran forward.

The two blacks yelled with excitement and lust for battle. Rifles were unknown weapons to them, so the only things they could think of were two long pike poles. These, of course, were useless just then. Enraged by their impotence they worked themselves into fury by shaking their improvised weapons and doing a war dance at the rail.

Nothing could be seen of the combating boats and canoes until we reached the bow, for the ship was forging ahead so that the scene of battle was now below the jib boom.

Immediately our rifles barked. Bul-

lets whistled into the surging mass which completely enveloped our boats. Only the oars swinging over and crashing down upon bushy heads gave us the information that as yet our men had not been annihilated.

Those boys certainly meant to avenge themselves while there was a spark of life. Three canoes were already floating bottom up. Overmanned, the narrow, unstable crafts had upset upon being crowded against the stout whaleboats. The spilled savages were floundering about, yelling. Bushmen, most of them, they were not the best of swimmers. Some of them barely kept afloat by thrashing the water wildly, others disappeared suddenly. Most likely they were being drawn down by sharp teeth, for summoned in some secret way man may never learn to understand, sharp fins were cleaving the water from every direction.

Unceasingly our shots crashed into the surging mass. The surprise attackers, themselves surprised by the quick response from the ship, dropped by twos and threes. One could not help hitting flesh at so close a range with bodies packed so closely as a target.

Just as I pulled my trigger for the fifth time some one touched me on the arm.

"Please help me—I don't understand this thing," came a sobbing voice.

Jean Bradley! She was struggling with the bolt of a rifle. Tears were streaming down her cheeks. As I struck the breech block open, a wisp of smoke coming from the breech told me that the cartridge which had been in the rifle had been fired. Then came the girl's shot simultaneously with mine, and two figures dropped from a canoe.

"Don't bother—I know now," came to my ears as I fired again.

Another shot over my shoulder. It struck the gunwale of a canoe, but a large, sharp splinter was raised just in time to bury itself into a body which stumbled over it.

Just then the vessel's stem plowed into the mixed mass of flotsam. A half dozen canoes turned turtle at being crowded under the slanting clipper bow —more work for our finned allies.

Three of our whaleboats drifted under the bow on the starboard side where I happened to be, with Mac on one side of me, Jean Bradley on the other. In the disorder there was but little chance to observe details, yet I saw that in one of these boats but one oar, in an other two oars were flailing. The third boat was crowded with living and dead blacks.

SINCE primitive savages were not familiar with the laws of motion they had not figured upon the ship's continuing its headway, tangling them with the boats' lines and crowding them under the overhanging bow. That had been the weak point of their strategy. The occupants of the canoes close to the vessel's sides now had no chance to wield their weapons. To keep their narrow crafts from upsetting was about all they could do. These helpless wretches gave our two black boys a chance to prove their gratitude.

No sooner did the canoes come within reach, than the sharp pike poles raised unmerciful havoc among the struggling occupants. There was not enough elbow room to span a bow or to throw a spear, and the light weapons proved of little use for warding off the blows and thrusts of the heavy, iron tipped poles. We left these canoes to the boys who had good cause for avenging their murdered tribesmen.

"Good fella, good fella!" shouted Mac encouragingly between shots at the more distant crafts.

In the canoes which were well clear of the ship lay the menace. Being now abreast, the raiders decided that it would be best to leave the boats alone for the present and to concentrate upon those who wielded rifles. Only through stilling the guns could the carefully planned attack be made a success. Arrows and spears began to whizz past and over our

heads, or struck the bulwark which shielded our bodies.

To escape the scores of flying weapons our best chance lay in preventing the archers from taking careful aim. Instead of firing at random at moving canoes, we reserved our shots for those which came to rest with spanned bows. Every time a man was dropped over the side of such a canoe, the craft would teeter for some time before its crew could steady it, and all shafts discharged went either high or low of their intended marks. Each shot then had the double effect of spoiling the marksmen's aim and wasting their arrows.

Some of the canoes dashed toward the ship, its occupants attempting to board amidships. Our tangles of spiked wire cables foiled them. It was a blessing that these savages had not had enough intercourse with white traders to have learned that the spikes on those cables could be rendered harmless by throwing thick, woven mats over them.

However, the guerrilla battle might have lasted all day. There were enough savages and, infuriated by their losses and seeing their plan spoiled, they showed no intention of retreating. If night had found us still fighting for our lives, what chance would we have had in darkness?

But now our allies arrived in droves. The sharks were emboldened by their growing number. The voracious monsters could no longer wait for floating bodies. Greedily they circled around the canoes. Let but an arm or a hand of one of our victims hang over the side of a canoe and immediately there was a tug-of-war, all but capsizing the narrow craft. With cries of alarm the marksmen dropped their bows, seized their spears and tried to drive the monsters off. In the ensuing struggle some of the canoes were upset. But if the natives managed to keep their slender craft on an even keel, one of us would drop an additional victim and more sharks finished the job.

It was a cruel sight. However it was but cruelty to the cruel. Without our unfeeling allies we could not have survived.

Even Father Delaney was now convinced that a rifle in his hand was a more effective weapon than the Bible. But he was a poor shot. If he did hit at all it was by chance.

Mac shouted:

"Don't shoot at all rather than take a chance of hittin' a shark. A shot would take the fight out o' him."

More than half an hour the battle had lasted. As yet the natives had not given a sign of abandoning their purpose. It seemed as if the devil doctors were determined to make us pay for the insult we had flung at them. What did the lives of scores of warriors mean to them as long as they would vindicate themselves? Some of the chiefs, easily distinguished by their gaudy paint, had been turned into shark bait. But what did the others care about that? It simply meant that there would be that many less to share the spoils.

Then, without apparent cause, came a big surprise!

All at once cries rang out which sounded like shouts of triumph and jeers. At once the natives dropped their bows and spears, took up their paddles and were in full retreat. The sudden turn left us so surprised that we withheld our fire. They seemed to be more than anxious now to get out of range of our bullets, although they knew by now that then their arrows could not touch us.

What could that have meant? Had they suddenly become aware of the approach of an ally of theirs in whom they had more confidence than in their own weapons?

Yes! Now we had time to look around, and one glance over the bow was enough.

We had drifted about half a mile clear of the atoll. A tide-rip which accelerated every minute had caught us. The tide was dragging us due northwest. Right within the course which we were heading, not more than three-quarters

of a mile away, there was a regular labyrinth of bare rocks.

All that the savages had to do now was to jeer at us, to feast their eyes on our desperate plight, to await the crash. Then, after darkness, finish us.

For there was not a breath of wind stirring, and the boats were disabled at our sides.

BUT Mac was not ready to give up. As long as there was water under the vessel's keel he would fight on. He shook his fist at the blazing sky. Then his bellow roared across the deck:

"Sheet home all square sails! Hoist whatever yards we can handle! Lively now!"

Father Delaney gasped with horror. Jean Bradley emitted a cry of alarm. They thought the man had suddenly gone mad. But when all those on deck dropped the rifles helter-skelter and madly hauled at sheets and halyards, they both recovered and lent a hand, wondering all the while what this could mean.

It was impossible for our small force to hoist the upper topsail yards within the short time permitted us. We left these yards down and hauled the topgallants flat with their sheets. The royals we hoisted. Then down with the sheets and tacks of the lower courses. This work was accomplished within five minutes.

"Fore braces, hard-a-port!" bellowed Mac.

While the yards swung around—easily hauled without any wind—Mac ran aft and swung the helm hard-a-port. Then I saw what he had in mind.

We were drifting toward the rocks head on. The current in which we were caught was running about four knots. Thus, while the hull was not cutting through the water, the rigging and sails were dragged through the still air at the rate of the tide's velocity. The resistance the slanting foresails offered to the air now acted as a drag, and the vessel's head swung to the east.

"Main braces, starboard!" came Mac's next command. "Then fore braces starboard! Haul out the spanker!"

Now the vessel was drifting with the current broadside on. But with every foot she drifted sidewise, her flattened sails cut the self-induced air current at a sharp angle, acting as gliders, so that her head was slowly forging to the east where there was clear water.

Let those to whom this is not quite clear hold a sheet of light cardboard about waist high at an angle with the floor, and let it drop. The sheet will not drop straight down; instead it will plane horizontally for some distance before it strikes the floor. In the case of the becalmed, drifting vessel the tidal current acted upon the sails as gravity does on your sheet of cardboard. But the resistance of the air affects the surface practically the same.

Now came anxious moments. Would the vessel forge enough ahead to clear the rocks? It was a desperate chance to take as a preference to dropping anchor. But to anchor there would most likely have left us at the mercy of the savages. If night had come before any wind, what chance would we have had in the darkness?

"Stand by the anchor for emergency, Kennedy," ordered Mac. "You, All-Hands, jump in the chains with the hand lead. Sing out your soundings. The rest of you see what you can do for the poor devils in the boats. I'll keep the wheel and hold her broadside on the current."

The four boats, still attached to their towlines, were now dragging alongside as far aft as the main rigging, three on the starboard side, one on the port.

One of the starboard boats contained the bodies of nine blacks. Overboard with them. On the bottom planking lay three of our shipmates, dead, terribly mutilated. The fourth one of that boat's crew had been lost overboard in the struggle.

A second boat gave up three dead

white men and one seriously wounded. Two dead and two wounded were taken from the third boat. The boat which was on the port side had fared the best. Of its crew only one man had been killed while three had survived. None of these three was seriously wounded. Two of them were able to reach the deck with little assistance.

Father Delaney and Jean Bradley now proved themselves able and willing. The wounded were well cared for. The dead, nine in all, had to await their turn. For now came urgent work.

All our activity had been watched by the savages from a fairly safe distance. As long as they did not bother us we took no chance of wasting our bullets at such long range.

The setting of our sails in the dead calm must have looked like a stupid effort to them. They were dead astern of us, thus they saw the ship drifting toward the rocks broadside on. Their boisterous shouts and jeers told us what they thought.

Of course those among them who were of the saltwater tribes knew something about sailing. Their fishermen used to sail out to sea with their outrigger canoes. They knew from experience that one could not sail without wind, and it is easily conceived that, in their minds, a large vessel would require even more wind than a small canoe. To those men they who once were feared and respected as devils must have now appeared to be utter fools.

For fifteen, twenty minutes the whole fleet lay astern, watching, gloating, thinking of the coming of night, waiting for the moment when they could feast their eyes on the stranded prize.

But the natives were viewing the ship from the wrong angle. Although she was moving at a right angle to the savages' line of vision, they did not see that she was moving ahead at the same time.

But as yet we were not certain whether Mac's maneuver would prove a success. Shallower and shallower became the sounding I took with the hand-lead. I shouted:

"Six fathoms!" I was almost certain that it would be followed by Mac's "Leggo anchor!"

But no. No such command came. We drifted on, to the observers astern, to certain destruction.

I took my soundings as fast as I could swing and haul up the lead.

"Five fathoms!— And one-half— four!"

Shallow water! But as yet no order to let go the anchor, and the rocks were coming nearer.

Another sounding.

"Five fathoms!" I must have been mistaken. Quickly, without taking time to look up, another.

"Five — !" Wrong again — once more . . .

"And one-half—five!"

Now I *had* to look up.

About thirty yards off the port quarter I saw the rocks gliding by. As far as the eye could reach to port there was nothing to be seen but blue water and sky.

Mac surely had made a breeze, for we had missed the snags by a safe margin.

CHAPTER XXI

HOMEWARD BOUND

NOW it must have dawned upon the savages that something had gone wrong. When, as seen by them, the ship's side was about to strike the first one of the rocks the howls of joy were beyond all bounds. But when the crash of timbers did not come, when the rocks appeared astern of the vessel, the howls broke off short. For a moment the whole fleet stared in silence.

Now bedlam broke loose once more. But the cries which reached us were yells for blood. Tenacious devils that those savages were, they could not get enough after they had once started. I presume it hurt that after such careful planning everything should go amiss.

At once the many paddle blades were blinking in the sunlight. The fleet shot ahead in hot pursuit. Mac had his eyes on them.

"Square the yards now so we'll be ready for wind from anywhere if it comes," he ordered calmly. "When we're squared pick up your guns. We're clear of the snags. I think this time the devils will fight to the last man."

And it looked very much as if Mac were right. There seemed to be something like grim determination in the approach of the fleet. When the first attack had been made in a dash from ambush, the savages knew that they caught us unprepared. Now, however, they knew that we were aware of their approach, they knew that our rifles could exact a toll before there was any use in spanning a single bow.

They seemed to have noticed that at the ship's stern there was no bulwark to shield the gunners, and that there were no spiked wire cables to guard against boarders. If the gunners should shoot from the shelter of the cabin, their bullets could not possibly reach such canoes as had gained the protection of the vessel's counter. Then the gunners would either have to come out into the open and expose their whole bodies to arrows and spears, or they would have to give an overwhelming mass of boarders a free hand.

At least they seemed to be determined to gamble the lives of a score or so of warriors to try some maneuver, for the whole attack was concentrated upon the stern.

During the half hour lull in the battle, the sharks too had dispersed.

We let the savages approach within a hundred yards, then we opened fire. Three blacks dropped, but that did not check the fleet. Ready hands immediately pushed the fallen men over the gunwales. They were not going to take any more chances of attracting blood crazed sharks.

Jean Bradley appeared aft, bearing a rifle. Kennedy tore it away from her.

"Young woman, I won't stand for havin' you expose yourself here aft. Your arm is so lame now that you can hardly carry the gun, let alone fire it. The best you can do now is pray for wind. It's the only thing that can save us."

Twenty yards astern were the canoes. About a dozen natives had been dropped, but under the prevailing order of the attack not one canoe had capsized. Some of those which had been turned over in the previous engagement had been righted and re-manned by warriors from other canoes so that the archers and spearmen had more room. At the same time the lightened crafts could maneuver more quickly.

Five or six yards nearer. We were within effective range of their arrows. At a signal all paddles were struck and bows were spanned.

The first volley of arrows came like a cloudburst. All but one of the shafts went wild. The one which did not miss struck me in the stomach while I reloaded my gun. A painful wound it was, but not serious enough to compel me to drop out of action.

THAT first hit they had scored encouraged the savages. Shouts of joy went up so that the cracking of our rifles was almost drowned. Another volley at closer range might be more effective.

Paddles were gripped again. The fleet dashed ahead, unmindful of its losses. Then came another hail of arrows, scoring one more hit, and this was serious.

Almost simultaneously with the release of the bow strings we had dropped flat on deck to let the shafts pass over us. But Bunk had lingered to pull the trigger once more. Then, at the moment when he threw himself forward, an arrow struck him in the chest. His fall then drove the shaft almost through him. With a groan he rolled over on his side, a stream of blood oozing from his mouth.

Bunk, whose shots were as good as those of three men, was out of the fight.

It looked as if this were to be our last stand. Already, as we rose to our knees to fire once more, we could hear canoes bumping under the ship's stern. There the savages were protected by the overhanging counter. To reach them we would have had to expose ourselves to a murderous concentration of fire. All we could do now was to lie low and wait for heads to appear below the open taffrail. But soon there would be too many heads for the few guns and bush knives we could muster.

We hugged the deck close to the vessel's stern, sniping at those canoes which lay off at a distance to enable their crews to keep up a protective fire for those who were preparing to board. The top of the counter could not be reached from the low canoes, but it was easily conjectured that, unseen to us, blacks were assisting each other to reach up. The tips of many spears could already be seen bristling beside the rail stanchions.

Then, in that darkest moment, something happened which just then appeared like a miracle. A miracle it was. For if it had come five minutes later the notorious *Emma P.* would have never been heard of again.

A half-mile beyond the canoes whence the menacing arrows came, the glossy surface of the sea was suddenly broken by small furrows. Wind ripples! Onward we saw them sweep over the sights of our rifles!

Then a shrill, feminine voice, almost hysterical:

"The breeze—the breeze! Thank God, it has come at last!"

The jumbled babel of voices below us suddenly rose to yells of consternation. There came heavy splashes. Black fingers were clutching over the edge of the counter; some of them released their hold when battered by the butts of guns, others slipped off. From the canoes which were in sight, arrows were flying wildly. Warriors were howling their rage. Many of them dropped their weapons and took up their paddles. They were determined to give chase as long as the vessel had not gained too much headway. Encouraged, we fired and loaded, fired and loaded once more. Then many of the canoes which had been concealed under the counter drifted into our line of sight, bottom up, for the ship was gathering headway.

Floundering near them, or clinging to them, were scores of blacks. Many of them still had their knees on the shoulders of others, and these were struggling frantically to clear themselves of the encumbrance to get their heads above water. The vessel's forward movement due to the sudden puff of wind had dragged the canoes so that the whole mass had lost its equilibrium. Now the warriors in the canoes which were afloat right side up had all they could do to save their imperiled comrades before any of the fins which were again circling the water should come near.

Only one more shot was fired then. It came from my rifle. In the most distant canoe dropped a painted figure with a headgear about eighteen inches wide.

"That squares for Bunk," I growled, when Uva Kulu struck the water.

"SIR, you should know better than to stand your watch tonight," Father Delaney admonished me when he saw me on deck during the eight to twelve watch. "How do you expect your wound to heal while you stay on your feet?"

"My wound," I echoed. "Say, my friend, this isn't a warship where there're lots of men to take a fellow's place every time he gets a little scratch."

"Yes," agreed Mac. "We got to keep goin' in this game. If you don't want to run risks, keep out of it, I say. Sooner or later we all get it."

With this Mac waved his hand at nine long bundles of canvas which lay in a row on the quarterdeck, awaiting morning.

The missionary shook his head gloomily.

"All those lives sacrificed for what?" he sighed. "It was most unfortunate that these men were in the boats where they had so little chance for defense. Why, it seems almost as if the savages knew that the greater part of your crew would be at such a disadvantage."

"Knew it!" echoed Mac. "O' course they knew it. They saw us tow the ship into the lagoon the first day we were there. Naturally they figured that we'd go out the same way. I can see it all now, after the damage is done. They cut down young palms on the island an' drove 'em into the sand, there at the point, to conceal their canoes till our boats were right under their noses. They know all about the weather around their island—that there wouldn't be any wind. They knew that if they'd show us that we couldn't do any more divin' we'd get out quick. I tell you, the more you let those savages know the more dangerous they get. They should have been let alone with the belief that we were devils."

I thought I saw the missionary wince under Mac's frown. But Mac went on heartlessly:

"Yes, an' these nine an' the one that's gone overboard ain't all. There'll be one more to—"

"Do you mean Bunk?" I cried out, aghast.

Mac nodded solemnly.

"No chance for Bunk. Lung's pierced. Had two hemorrhages since we put him below. He won't last more than another day."

"Terrible!" breathed the missionary. "Terrible, to think that it should have come about like this, while I tried to do my duty."

One could see that the good man was heartbroken. Mac could not leave him like that. He placed his hand gently on the man's shoulder.

"It ain't been you, my friend," he consoled. "It's the curse of the pearls that did it. That an'—" he shook his fist at the face of the moon—"that grinnin' mug up there. He did it all. Now look at him smile as if he's proud of his work."

Mac bent his face close to the missionary's ear and pointed aft.

"You want to know why he's smilin' now after doin' so much mischief? Well, look at the bright side of his work. Then you'll know."

Aft at the taffrail stood the figures of a golden haired girl and a young man. They were close together, their silhouettes blending almost into one. They were gazing at the bark's silvery wake, oblivious to all but that beneath their feet was a ship which bore them toward happiness.

"All-Hands," Mac spoke to me in an undertone, "have the watch aft to splice the main brace. But don't make any noise about it.

"Smile, you old cuss up there, smile while there's a chance!"

THE END

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A FEW more of the escapades of Paul Bunyan, hero of tall timber and taller story.

Each of you will have to decide as to their authenticity for yourselves, I'm afraid. Or possibly we might put the matter up to James Stevens, of our Writers' Brigade, whose famous book on Paul is generally considered to be as veracious a biography of the man as any one could write, besides being a lasting monument to his fame.

Crystal Falls, Michigan

I couldn't help being faintly amused at Foster-Harris' naive suggestion in the Aug. 15th *Adventure* that Paul Bunyan had at one time been (of all things!) an oil man, for if there was one thing Old Paul detested, it was oil in any form. There are two reasons for that, and the first may explain how such a misunderstanding came about.

Here it is, and any of the old-timers will bear me out, should I be suspected of taking liberties with the truth:

Paul's great-grandson—Young Paul, as he was called—at a very early age developed a somewhat perverted sense of humor. One morning at breakfast, or rather, just as Paul was sitting down, Young Paul slipped a good sized porcupine into the chair and, while the old man's attention was thus diverted, upended a barrel of Epsom salts in his coffee. After pulling a few dozen quills out of his stern, Old Paul downed his coffee at a single gulp, not noticing until it was too late that something was wrong. Now, a barrel of Epsom salts taken on a practically empty stomach is likely to do things to a person, and Paul came as near being sick that day as he ever was in his life. Well, Paul never was a man to take a joke lightly; and as a result, after giving Young

Paul a good lacing with a decking chain, turned him out of camp and disinherited him completely. After that, Paul never could stand the sight of oil, for he said that oil made him think of castor oil and castor oil made him think of Epsom salts, etc.

AND so it wouldn't surprise me, knowing how Young Paul, even at that age (about six years) held a grudge and, wanting to humiliate the old man, might have carried it so far as to go to the oil fields. The childish things ascribed to Paul Bunyan by Mr. Harris would seem to point to such a course.

The second reason for Paul's hatred of oil was that he once, even though unwittingly, brought in a well himself, although he never would permit it to be mentioned in his presence. It happened over in section 35, just northeast of Three Mile Falls on the Little Onion. It might be mentioned that Three Mile Falls was so called for the very obvious reason that there was an uninterrupted drop of three miles, although there is, at present, hardly any fall at all because the gorge below the falls was practically filled up with bark which the peelers at the tie camp threw over the brink.

ONE day Paul was driving a well to supply drinking water for the camp nearby, and as the camp was only a small one, was using only 36 inch casing. He had the point down some three hundred feet and was easing it down about forty feet at a time with light taps of his sledge, so that he wouldn't drive the point through the water bearing gravel. The Bull of the Woods—my own grandfather, by the way—was standing nearby and, in his dry way, asked Paul if he wasn't feeling well, mentioning that he could do better himself. Paul was a man with a temper, especially on a delicate job like that, and thinking that the Bull thought that he, Paul, couldn't drive a 36 inch casing more than forty feet at a stroke, took one terrific swing and drove the casing clear out of sight.

To make a long story short, Paul stood there cussing my grandfather in such a terrible voice that he failed to hear the roar in the hole where the casing had disappeared and consequently got a thorough soaking with oil when it blew in. Measurements taken years later showed a depth of 18,760 feet. To make matters worse, Paul had quite a time getting the flow of oil stopped. On the spur of the moment he stuck his thumb into the hole, but as there was nothing within reach to plug it permanently, he got another sousing when he made a dash for a young white pine which was the only tree real close. The tree was only about 20 feet on the butt, so he broke it off with one hand and at the same time stripped the limbs for a couple of hundred feet with the other, broke the top off and rammed the whole thing into the well, but he had swallowed so much oil that it never was really safe to mention oil in his presence.

EVENTUALLY, he used the oil for greasing skids, as it was only a small one flowing some hundred thousand barrels an hour. But he often said that if tallow wasn't so hard to get he wouldn't use the oil at all, but as it was, it cut down his tallow bills about twenty-five per cent and that was nothing to sneeze at. The well went dry about the time he went west from Michigan, and no oil has been found in this section since.

So, together with his hatred of everything oily and the fact that Young Paul may have carried his grudge so far as to go to work in the oil fields, and also that Paul never could find the kind of men who could do a real day's work any place but in the Big Woods, my amusement was *very* faint at reading Mr. Harris' article. To even imagine that full grown men would really work in an oil field!

And who ever heard of Paul riding a bicycle! His own two feet took him wherever he wanted to go. It is barely possible that Young Paul, in the over-civilized environment of the oil fields, might take to bicycle riding, but I doubt even that. More likely it is, after all, just some young upstart.

—D. W. ARCHIE

AT THE time Captain Raabe was writing the following note, in connection with "Full Moon Tide", concluded in this issue, he was making final preparations for a most unusual adventure. The captain, still hale and hearty at seventy-three, had just completed overhauling his forty-foot yawl, the *Spindrift*. In it he is going to make a trip to the South Seas, to visit again, after an interim of almost half a century, the scene of many a romantic episode of his early windjammer days. I know all the other members of Camp-fire will join me in wishing him lots of luck and *bon voyage!*

Port Washington, Long Island

Facts often being stranger than fiction, many of the incidents in "Full Moon Tide" may seem imaginary. But they're not. The island of Vanua Lava had remained an island of mystery until well along in the eighties. So much so that a great eruption of the mountain at the north shore, where the strange adventure happened, was left unheeded. I do believe that it has never been recorded. Of course, there was a good excuse for such neglect. It happened within a few months after the great eruption of Krakatoa, in eighteen hundred and eighty-three.

Those of the present generation who regard such tales with incredulity should realize that the South Sea Islands have changed, I daresay, more than any other part of the world during the last forty or fifty years. The eyes of explorers were turned toward the interior of such vast continents as Africa; and such small islands as Vanua Lava, about the size of New York's Staten Island, were left to the freelance traders. Yet such islands were greater repertories of adventure than the darkest regions of the continents.

WHY has the narrative not been brought to light before? A fair question, that, and easily explained. There are but few left who remember the old freelance trading days. The life of the average freelance trader was not long, and rather the hectic life between trips gave those who survived but little thought of recording their experiences in script.

Few explorers get the true accounts of the customs of remote savages, but the old-time traders did. Why? Here is the answer: The South Pacific natives are foxy. When they suspect that any one has come to their shores to study their habits they will act for all they are worth. They have an almost uncanny way of finding out what the sightseers expect of them and they will let them have it. But in their intercourse with those who simply came to trade with them they acted natural—almost too natural at times.

How many readers of *Adventure* have ever heard of such a thing as laws among the most treacherous and primitive savages of the Solomons, the Malaitans? And yet those blacks had a law to which they adhered religiously. The law was that any one guilty of willfully destroying foodstuffs must himself be converted to food.

Would not such a law work wonders among our civilized profiteers? Only, who would want to eat them?

—CAPTAIN RAABE

JAPANESE arms and armor—a reader considers the question of age and rarity versus value.

The University of Chicago,
Department of Art

In the Ask Adventure section of the March 15th issue of your magazine there appeared a query on Japanese arms and armor. In the answer to this query there appeared the statement, "Whereas Europe ceased using armor over two centuries ago, its use in Japan continued until the ancient feudal régime came to an end about 1868. For this reason huge quantities of Japanese arms and armor can still be found in the shops of Japan, and it does not rank in interest with that of Europe with collectors. At a sale held in New York, January, 1927, two lots were offered which consisted of six pole-arms and wooden stand, each. Each lot brought but $35.00." The editorial heading to this answer included the statement "There aren't many rare antiques yet."

It is of course quite true that large quantities of Japanese arms and armor are still extant and that much of this material is of little value. However the implication that age and rarity alone create the value of an antique weapon is distinctly erroneous. In Japanese arms and armor, as in everything else, there were made specimens of good, bad and indifferent quality. In Europe most of the low grade arms and armor have long ago gone to the melting pot; in Japan much of this unworthy material still remains, and it is largely such poor material which has found its way into Occidental collections of curiosities. The reason why those pole-arms sold for only $35.00 was very probably that they were only worth $35.00. But there always have been in Japan and elsewhere armor and weapons of fine quality which, from their first production, have been objects of great value. Most of these still remain in Japan, though a few have come to the Occident. Wherever they are they bring very good prices. In the Seki sale in November, 1927, a suit of armor brought 23,190 yen (over $11,000); at another sale in May of the following year a sword by Sanetoshi fetched 13,189 yen.

—THOMAS T. HOOPES

A NOTE from Arthur O. Friel concerning his story, "The Fate of Anton LeBaron," beginning in this issue:

Brooklyn, New York

Some of you who have been in the Amazon bush may feel that you know the identity of the lost explorer whom I here call *LeBaron*. But don't be too positive. More than one explorer has been lost in there. Yes, considerably more than one. The fates of some of them are known to certain scientific bodies, though not to the general public. Others are not definitely established even by the Brazilian Indian Service, which has ways of finding out things. Out of all these missing men you can take your pick. But don't ask me, *compañeros*, to verify your conclusions. I'm not telling anything more than is here set down. In fact, I have, as some of you will notice, faked the names of the river and its Indian tribes. And don't be too sure that you recognize these, either. I may have made them look partly familiar just to throw you on the wrong trail.

Although I am not telling who *LeBaron* is, I will tell who he is not. He is not the English-

man, Fawcett, who disappeared in the Xingu region with two companions, who was sought by a relief expedition, but whose end still is not conclusively proved. This is mentioned here simply because the Fawcett case has had so much publicity that it would naturally come to mind. The original of *LeBaron* vanished some time before that.

The characters, habitations, and habits of the Indians, however, have not been altered in this story. They are real, even if their names are not. So are other conditions along my river with the disguised name. The *genipapa,* too, is not faked, as some of you real back-bush rangers can testify. And in case any one is inclined to criticize the roasting and mingling with wood ash of the launch captain's "tobacco", I'll just say that this is the custom in that particular region. Over in the Andes they use it differently. But that's a different place, with different people.

And so, enough. If I say much more I'll be giving away too much of the yarn to you old-timers who, like myself, always read Camp-fire first.

—ARTHUR O. FRIEL

A NOTE on Bully Hayes, South Seas pirate. This reader maintains the theory that the prototype of the character who has served numerous authors (including the late Jack London) as a fiction hero, was really two different men.

Olympia, Washington

In your Sept. 1st issue, I see that Paul Searles is looking for information about Bully Hayes, and that he suggests that there may have been two men named Hayes. He is right on that point.

I am not old enough to have known either of them. My information was gathered in my youth from men who claimed to have known one or both. The first to arrive in the South Seas was "Yankee" Hayes. His nationality was not known with certainty, but he spoke with a Southern accent; and was commonly supposed to be American. All Americans are Yankees in the S. S. Yankee Hayes, was tall, slim and good looking. He had yellow hair, which he wore long; it was said to conceal the fact that his ears had been cropped in California. He was an educated man, with good manners, and he married (and promptly deserted) a daughter of the Governor of West Australia. He was killed in a gambling quarrel about '65 in New Zealand; I think Wanganui.

BULLY HAYES was a later comer, arriving about the time that Yankee was killed. Yankee, by the way, was a gambler, not a sailor. Bully was a giant, red haired and blue eyed, and a seaman by trade. He had a Scotch accent; and no education to speak of. A competent schooner man, but no navigator. He usually picked up some down-and-out navigator as mate, but sometimes had to sail without one. In which case it was apt to take him a long time to find the island he was looking for. Several times he found some other island, with unexpected results. For all his size he was no bucko, merely a bully.

He was knocked overboard by a cook whom he had abused, in the early '70's. The cook used a broken oar, and caught Bully leaning over the topsail. The cook did not stop to pick him up. Mr. Searles suggests that he was still playing his old tricks as late as 1890. That would have been impossible. The only way that seagoing crooks like Hayes could get by was to put their vessels under the "flag" of some independent native chief. The chief being, in international law, a sovereign state, his flag got by until the British (or maybe it was the Australians) took a notion to clean up. They gave their gunboat captains orders to shoot first and inquire afterwards. And the petty pirates vanished quick.

Long before 1890 all the islands were annexed by some one. And ships had to have a registry. Which made the old style piracy impossible; except in the Solomons, where there was nothing to steal and a tough job to steal that. Solomon Islanders are not easy going Polynesians.

I think there has been more bunk written about Bully Hayes than about any other racketeer that ever came over the pike. And every author whose work I have read has apparently been unaware that he was confusing two men.

—HUGH T. SEPPINGS

ANOTHER interesting comment on rough diamonds:

Globe, Arizona

I have sat back and listened to the various subjects that have come up in Camp-fire but to date have been too backward in coming forward. But I felt that I had to join in the discussion about diamonds.

I have polished diamonds from one hundred to the carat to single stones weighing thirty-three carats and in brilliant, marquise and square-cut shapes, and have seen a lot of rough diamonds. The prevailing shape was octahedral. It might interest other members to know that the "grain", as it is known to the trade, is triangular and that it cannot be polished unless one wears the stone down across the most prominent grain in the facet to be polished.

Mr. Blair says in his letter that diamonds must be worked by a lapidary. A lapidary is one who polishes all stones or gems that are not diamonds. I'd hate to try and polish a diamond on a lapidary's wheel.

I can saw, cut and polish a diamond and have never heard any other name for workers in the diamond trade than "diamond workers" in English, *diamantaire* in French and *diamant slyper* in Dutch.

—JOHN WILLIAMS

BILL ADAMS tell us something about the original of his hero in the story, "The Alien," in this issue:

Dutch Flat, California

It may interest you a little to know that *Taffir* is not drawn altogether from fiction. I sailed with him for two years. His name was not *Taffir*, of course. I met him just as I describe our meeting, when he and I were starting our second voyage. I did ask him to go to a theatre with me. It was "Iolanthe" that we saw that night. And on the way down to the ship I did take him into a pub, and there, in that frowsy little pub, he did actually ask for a glass of milk!

In later days he was in fact shanghaied. He was mate of a fine old wool clipper at the time, and how he ever came to be shanghaied I never found out. He was just as interested in ships as my story makes him. And he was just as regular with his letters home.

I never met his parents. He was devoted to them. The man whom I made use of for his father in my story was a red-bearded Englishman who many years ago had a little cobbler's shop in a small inland town of California. I have described him as he was. When first I met him I took a pair of old boots in to have them soled. Before I could open my mouth he looked up at me from a pair of condemnatory eyes and in a doleful voice enquired—

"Dost thou believe in the Lord?"

I didn't tell him that that was none of his business. I realized that I had run across one more funny type, as funny in appearance as in type almost. I sidetracked his question somehow. Later on I came to know him well. His wife was a fat woman and a wonderful cook. A great one for asking me in to "'elp eat some 'am an' heggs". He fed like a king, and besides being a leading member of a very fanatical sect, and also tremendously proud of his island and altogether loyal to his king, was decidedly selfish to his fat and worshipping wife.

ON THE cold winter days when the little one-horse town of Modesto was shrouded in the bitterly penetrating fog that hangs over it for several months each winter, she toddled down to the shop with a piping hot dinner for him. It was a walk of some blocks, and if his dinner did not arrive hot, his demeanor was stern. He might quite easily have taken the walk home himself. But the woman was his willing slave.

In summer, when the thermometer stood at 110 in the shade, she toddled down to his shop with her fat face moist with sweat, that he might be saved going out into the baking sun. That I was damned, quite hopelessly damned, the shoemaker was perfectly sure of. He grew tired of trying to save my poor soul; but damned though I was, chose for some odd reason to favor me with his peculiar friendship.

SHOULD any of our readers doubt the feasibility of taking a broken down tramp across Biscay, as *Taffir* took the *Koenig*, he may set his mind at rest. The feat was accomplished by the skipper of a tramp, some time in the late nineties. I recall it very well.

"Two eggs and a glass of milk". Often when I fix my breakfast eggs and take the stopper out of the milk bottle, *Taffir* comes to my mind. He was a topping good sailor and, blow high or blow low, a fine shipmate. Unsophisticated, if ever any one was. Had he a dime he would share it. Had he a nickel, it was yours if you seemed to need it. Likely he died in the war. Likely he lies deep under salt rolling water. Good luck to him on Davy Jones' dancing floor!

—BILL ADAMS

OUR Camp-fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The spirit of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

If you are come to our Camp-fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Kangaroo

THIS mysterious marsupial, when it is born, is almost as immature as a tadpole.

Request:—"I would appreciate it very much if you would send me some information on the kangaroo. I am told that it is born only 1½ inches tall. Will you please send me some facts? How tall is a kangaroo when full grown? How long is the life of the animal?"

—BERTHA GILLEY, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Alan Foley:—Though the size of kangaroos is rarely the subject of precise record at the moment of birth, and naturally varies in the various species and individuals of species, the young of the larger kangaroos are usually slightly over an inch in length at birth and probably never exceed an inch and a quarter.

The average age of a kangaroo bred in captivity in the Zoological Gardens in Sydney is said to be 12 years, though those of the more tropical species, from North Australia, generally died of old age at 8 years. It is not possible to give a truly authentic average age for kangaroos under normal wild conditions, but they have been known to live for twenty years in semi-wild conditions, which suggests that under wild conditions they would enjoy a better average than when in captivity. The height varies according to the species. The largest I have ever brought down, an old man "boomer", stood about seven feet when reared up on its hind legs.

It is rather difficult to explain the simple facts of generation and birth in everyday language but, in common with all marsupials, the connection made between the embryonic and maternal tissues in kangaroos is not so complete as in the truly placental furred animals, in which the union of the blood stream exists.

For this reason, and because of the fundamental differences in the female organs of generation, the period of development within the parent is limited and the young of marsupials are born in a relatively immature condition compared with those of the placental mammals.

This is shown by the fact that the forelimbs of newly born kangaroos are much larger and better developed, for assistance in the journey upward through the fur of the parent to the pouch, than are the hind limbs, which subsequently grow to much greater proportions.

The immaturity of the animal on reaching the pouch, and the amount of development undergone while attached to the teat, are indicated by the fact that the term "pouch-embryo" is often applied in scientific writings.

From the foregoing you will realize that, broadly speaking, the kangaroo at birth is immature in the extreme. The greater part of its development takes place while attached to the teat, within the pouch, and it is at a much later date that the kangaroo actually leaves the pouch and commences what we may best describe as an entirely separate life.

I hope the foregoing is quite clear. For detailed particulars write to The Australian Museum, Sydney, Australia, for a copy of Volume II, Part II, of the *Australian Museum Magazine*. Send half a dollar to cover cost and postage. This issue contains "The Mystery of Marsupial Birth and Transference to the Pouch" and it is an excellent article dealing with the problem about which you are seeking information.

Baseball

GETTING on a pro team.

Request:—"It is my ambition to become a professional baseball player when I have finished high school. I am sixteen now, and considered a pretty good player. How could I get on a pro team?"—GERARD BALDASSARI, Galveston, Texas

Reply, by Mr. Frederick G. Lieb:—In following your ambition, I would say play the best ball you can in whatever games you are in—high school, amateur leagues or semi-pros. If you do that, sooner or later you will attract the attention of some one who will give you a professional offer. Ott came to the Giants straight from high school in Gretna, Ia., when he was only sixteen; Foxx was with the Athletics at seventeen. Lindstrom played in a World Series with the Giants at eighteen.

However, I would wait until I was eighteen at least, and try to finish high school. There are class D and C leagues in the South, Southwest or Middle West, where you might try to make a start, Western Association, Arizona State League, Mississippi Valley League, etc.

Mexico

MAYAN ruins in the unexplored San Pedro territory.

Request:—"Unless something unexpected occurs, I am bringing an expedition down to Mexico to explore and film parts of the Usumacinta River basin. We hope to leave for Frontera in January, arriving there about the end of the month.

There are, including myself, three members in the expedition. Do you think we will be able to secure a native guide and interpreter at Balancan? The purpose of the expedition is to search for new Mayan ruins as well as to secure a complete account of our travels on 16 mm. motion picture film.

We intend to bring all canoes, food and other equipment from the States. Anything you can tell me about country we intend traveling in, guides, and the difficulties to be met, will be greatly appreciated."

—CHARLES A. POWELL, JR., Elizabeth, New Jersey

Reply, by Mr. John Newman Page:—Parts of the Usumacinta and San Pedro territory have never been explored by white men. You will have some unique experiences and the chances are strongly in favor of your finding some hitherto undiscovered Maya ruins. Uncovering them after you have found them will be quite a proposition, though, unless you are prepared to employ plenty of native labor.

You will undoubtedly be able to procure a native guide and interpreter at Balancan. Better insist on having one that the *presidente municipal* will vouch for, both as to honesty and competence. Once having procured a guide in whom you can place unlimited confidence, it might be well to route your expedition, to some extent, in accordance with his advice.

Of course you will want a complete medicine kit; be sure that a plentiful supply of quinine is included, and take it *before* you get malaria or jungle fever instead of *after*. It's all right to bring your canoes, food, etc., from the States, though you will inevitably find yourselves living "off the country," and the native boatmen may find your canoes harder to handle than their own inferior craft, simply because not accustomed to them.

Camp Oven

TEST your stone for fire-resisting qualities before you build.

Request:—"Will you kindly send complete directions for making a stone camp oven of a permanent nature?"

—MARGARET REESE, Lansing, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—Height of the flue should be 5 or 6 feet; the top on which the cooking is done about 3 feet; the interior filled with earth within 18 inches of the top. This top may be either cast iron, or sheet iron supported on cross bars, size to be governed by the number to be cooked for. A sheet of iron to be propped in front to regulate the draft will be a great help.

Some varieties of stone have a tendency to spall off and disintegrate rapidly when exposed to fire, so it would be well to test your available stone before beginning the work. If there is a prevailing breeze at the chosen location, build the oven with the flue downwind, both for the sake of better draft and to keep the smoke from the cook's eyes.

Japanese Newspapers

RICKSHAW pullers sometimes buy two or three papers a day to get all the gossip, which is written in a free and easy style.

Request:—"I am enclosing a piece which I clipped from a Japanese paper which I happened to run across at work. I am interested in collecting newspapers from all over the world. I am only saving the name and date lines which usually appear at the top of the first page on our newspapers.

1. Would you please tell me if I have the desired part of this newspaper?

2. Could you tell me the name and city from which it came?

3. Could you tell me the names and cities of some of the larger Japanese newspapers and how they compare with our newspapers in regard to extent of news coverage, sports news, advertisements, and other features?"

—FRED WILSON, JR., Wildwood, New Jersey

Reply, by Mr. Oscor E. Riley:—1, 2. The first of a vernacular newspaper enclosed in your letter was that of the *Shin-aichi,* a leading daily of Nagoya, Japan.

3. As you request the names of some of the foremost newspapers of Japan, in order that you may add them to your collection of the world's newspapers, I give the best known ones below: *Tokyo Mainichi,* established 1870, Tokyo; *Hochi,* 1872, Tokyo; *Tokyo Nichi Nichi,* 1872; the *Yomiuri,* 1874, Tokyo; *Chugai Shogyo Shimpo,* 1876, Tokyo; the *Osaka Mainichi,* 1876 and the *Osaka Asahi,* 1879.

Somewhat newer newspapers of Japan, all founded in Tokyo in the 1880's, are the *Asahi, Miyako, Yamato, Chuo, Kokumin, Yorozu* and the *Maiyu Shimbun.*

A monograph published by M. Ohta of the *Hochi,* Tokyo, stated that in the following twelve-page newspapers, the proportion of advertising to reading matter stands: *Hochi,* advertising 60 columns vs. reading matter 84 columns; *Asahi,* Tokyo, 62 vs. 82; the *Jiji,* Tokyo, 62 vs. 82; *Kokumin,* 55 vs. 89; *Osaka Mainichi,* 68 vs. 76; *Osaka Asahi,* 67 vs. 77. The latter two newspapers are credited with having the largest circulations in Japan.

Cable news is not as important in Japan as in New York, due to the distance of Europe from the Far East and the necessarily high press rates. Telegraphic news from the continent of Asia is well covered.

However, most of the news in Japanese newspapers is local, with political and sporting news being featured. The gossip page is the one most widely read. Rickshaw pullers sometimes buy two or three papers a day to get all the gossip, which is written in a free and easy, human interest way.

Cape Stiff

"THE Knell of the Horn," as predicted by Captain Dingle, has almost come to pass.

Request:—"I have been reading stories about Cape Horn all my life, and for a long time have been wondering just what the place actually looks like. A search of two good reference libraries reveals nothing whatever in the way of pictures or information, except a sketch made in the 1700's by an officer on a British frigate. One wonders whether the weather is always cold and stormy, or if there are not sometimes sunny days and calm periods. How big is Horn Island? Is it inhabited? Is there any vegetation on it? Is there any appreciable traffic around the Horn nowadays, and do any passenger boats go around the Horn?

Perhaps I am alone in this curiosity, but I should imagine it must be a subject which must be of interest to everybody who reads *Adventure.* I perhaps do not need to tell you how much I enjoy anything written by yourself."

—DR. D'ARCY PRENDERGAST, Toronto, Canada

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—Cape Horn is by no means *always* stormy—at least to the extent of some fiction writers' imagination—but it is bad enough often to merit all that has been said of it. There is a record of a British shipmaster, Thomas Yardley Powles, making twenty-eight passages of the Horn and never meeting bad weather. He always made one Summer passage. That is exceptional. The truth is that ships with luck, in the Summer months—November, December, January and February—might now and then sail around Old Stiff with royals set; in the Winter—June, July, August, September—the easy passage was almost a miracle.

In my own experience of eight passages I remember but one to the westward which did not take thirty days or over getting past the Corner, and since it is always freezing cold when the foul winds blow, and ships in the iron and steel era rarely encountered the Horn loaded to less than their full marks, all the bitterness you have read about could then be doubled and still be within the truth.

I have seen, on the one occasion mentioned, the sea so smooth and the sun so bright within two miles of the Cape, that even men who *knew* what it *could* be like called each other liars when yarning about its evil moods. I made some sketches in my Log Book that time—which I will try to reproduce here at the end of the letter.

As for your other queries, Horn Island, the southern point of which is Cape Horn, is about two miles long by one and a half to two broad, to the best of my knowledge. The point of the Cape itself is some 1,400 feet high, and it looks ugly in the best of weather, black and sheer. Near the eastern and western cliffs are small

rocks on which the sea always breaks.

There are no people on Horn Island; over most of the slopes a scrub growth survives which is very similar to the dwarf trees and scrub found on the more arid islets of the Bermudas, although the places are widely dissimilar in every way. This growth is pretty well scoured off from the southern slopes.

There is very little traffic around the Horn now. Only an occasional nitrate ship from Chile or grain ship from Australia. Passenger steamers rarely saw the Horn; they used the Magellan Straits, which were impracticable for sailing ships on account of the terrific uncertainty of the winds, which are fatal in narrow waters to vessels which may successfully fight them with ample searoom.

In a bygone issue of *Adventure* I had a story called "The Knell of the Horn," in which I sought to show that with the passing of sail from the seas the last human eye would sight the Horn. That may or not be strictly true, but there is nothing to take ships there when sail is gone, and I personally believe that my little yarn will prove to be a true forecast.

There are at present three vacancies on the Ask Adventure staff:

1. South Sea Islands
2. Canada, Part 2 (Southeastern Quebec)
3. Africa, Part 7 (Sierra Leone to Old Calabar; West Africa; Southern and Northern Nigeria)

Readers who feel that they are qualified to serve as experts on these subjects are invited to state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure*, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.
3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 303 Laurel Ave., Libertyville, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, New Jersey.

Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

Automotive and Aircraft Engines *Design, operation and maintenance.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, *including foreign and American makes.*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons, *pole arms and armor.*—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 939 Timberman Road, Grandview, Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.

Hiking CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Camping and Woodcraft PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tennessee.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting: development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.* —VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystallography, color and chemical composition.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk, General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R., 442 Forty-ninth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 541 No. Harper Ave., Hollywood, Cal.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, Farmingdale, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.* —THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1006 E. 10th St., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ichthyology *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Ornithology *General information on birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Linguistics and Ethnology (*a*) *Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology.* (*b*) *Languages and the problems of race migration.* (*c*) *Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Old Songs that Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON. *Archive of American Folk-Song; Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "Daniel," *The World-Telegram*, 73 Day St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Boxing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 455 West 23rd St., New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, wages, duties, addresses of all ocean lines and liners; shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Alexandria, Va.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping; names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of all American documental steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all Government owned vessels.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Alexandria, Va.

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The Sea Part 5 *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.* —CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean.* (*Siberian Waters.*)—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure.*

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

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Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

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GLENALLAN *of the* CLANS

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

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